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"THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS,"

OR

ANNALS

OF

THE ENGLISH STAGE,

FROM

THOMAS BETTERTON TO EDMUND KEAN.

ACTORS—AUTHORS—AUDIENCES.

BY

DR. DORAN, F.S.A.,

AUTHOR OF "TABLE TRAITS," "HISTORY OF COURT FOOLS," "QUEENS OF ENGLAND OF THE HOUSE OF HANOVER," ETC.

SECOND EDITION.

(*Revised, corrected, and enlarged.*)

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TO

Edward M. Ward, R.A.,

IN MEMORY OF PLEASANT OLD CONVERSE

ON

PLAYS, PLAYERS, AND PLAY-GOING TIMES,

THIS "PEOPLE'S EDITION" OF

"THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS,"

IS INSCRIBED,

Mark of homage to the Artist and esteem for the Friend,

WITH THE BEST WISHES OF

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

A Second Edition of "Their Majesties' Servants" being required, I gladly avail myself of the opportunity afforded by the public favour, to offer a cheap issue of these annals of the English stage, in one volume,—an edition which I have been repeatedly solicited, by numerous applicants, to prepare. By compression of details that were too diffuse, by omission of passages not directly bearing on the general subject of the book, by correction of errors that had been overlooked, and by addition of narrative which served further to illustrate my story, I trust I have rendered the work worthy of the general patronage, to which it is now (in a greatly improved form) respectfully submitted.

J. DORAN.

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THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

An obscure Latin passage in an ancient chronicler of London, leaves it uncertain whether, under the Norman kings, the metropolis possessed anything like a *scenic* entertainment, or only contrivances in place of scenes. However this may have been, it is certain that one of our earliest theatres, had Geoffrey, a monk, then or after, for its manager, and Dunstable for a locality. This early manager, who flourished about 1119, rented a house in the town just named, when a drama was represented, which had St. Katherine for a heroine, and her whole life for a subject. This proto-theatre was, of course, burnt down; and the managing monk withdrew to the cell at St. Albans, in which he ended his days.

Through a course of Mysteries, Miracle-plays, (illustrating Scripture, history, legend, and the sufferings of the martyrs,) Moralities, (in which the vices were in antagonism against the virtues,) and Chronicle-plays, which were history in dialogue, we finally arrive at legitimate Tragedy and Comedy. Till this last and welcome consummation, the church as regularly employed the stage for religious ends, as the old heathen magistrates did when they made village festivals the means of maintaining a religious feeling among the villagers.

Mysteries and Miracle-plays kept the stage from the Norman

to the Tudor era. The Moralities began to displace them during the reign of Henry VI., who was a less beneficial patron of the stage than Richard III., who was its first practically useful patron. Never, previous to Richard's time, had an English prince been known to have a company of players of his own. When Duke of Gloucester, a troop of such servants was attached to his household. Richard was unselfish; whenever he was too "busy" to receive instruction or amusement at their hands, he gave them licence to travel, and forth went the mirthful company, from county to county, mansion to mansion, from one corporation-hall and from one inn-yard to another, playing securely under the sanction of his name, winning favour for themselves, and a great measure of public regard, probably, for their then generous and princely master. Richard ennobled the profession, the gentlemen of the Inns of Court took it up, and they soon had kings and queens leading the applause of approving audiences. To the same example may be traced the custom of having dramatic performances in public schools, the pupils being the performers. These boys, or, in their place, the children of the Chapel Royal, were frequently summoned to play in presence of the King and Court. Boatsful of them went down the river to Greenwich, or up to Hampton Court, to enliven the dulness or stimulate the religious enthusiasm of their royal auditors there. At the former place, and when there was not yet any suspicion of the orthodoxy of Henry VIII., the boys of St. Paul's acted a Latin play before the sovereign and the representatives of other sovereigns. The object of the play was to exalt the Pope, and consequently, Luther and his wife were the foolish villains of the piece, exposed to the contempt and derision of the delighted and right-thinking hearers.

In the older days, the playwrights, even when members of the clergy, were actors as well as authors. In later times, the stage owed to a clergyman, the first regularly constructed English comedy, "Ralph Roister Doister," in 1540. The author was a 'clerk,' named Nicholas Udall, whom Eton boys, whose Master he was, hated because of his harshness. The rough and reverend gentleman brought forth the above piece, just one year previous to his losing the Mastership, on suspicion of being concerned in a robbery of the college plate.

Subsequently to this, the Cambridge youths had the courage to play a tragedy called *Pammachus*, which must have been offensive to the government of Henry VIII. Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, Chancellor of the University, immediately wrote a letter

to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Matthew Parker. It is dated 27th March, 1545. A strict examination followed. Nearly the entire audience passed under it, but not a man could or would remember that he had heard anything to which he could make objection. Ultimately, Parker was left to deal with the parties as he thought best; and he wisely seems to have thought it best to do nothing. Some of the Southwark actors were the "servants" of Henry Grey, Marquis of Dorset. In 1551 he was promoted to the dukedom of Suffolk, but his players were then prohibited from playing anywhere, save in their master's presence. The young king Edward's patronage of his own "servants" was not marked by a princely liberality; the salary of one of his players of interludes, John Brown, was five marks yearly, as wages; and one pound three shillings and fourpence, for his livery.

Of the party dramatists of his reign, Bale was the most active. Bale, once a Romanist, bishop (of Ossory), had gone through marvellous adventures, and had converted abstruse doctrinal subjects into edifying comedies. The bishop was a Boanerges; and when his "John, King of England," was produced, the audience, comprising two factions, found the policy of Rome illustrated with such effect, that while one party denounced, the other applauded the vigorous audacity of the author. In Mary's reign, a play, styled "Respublica," exhibited the iniquity of the Reformation, pointed out the dread excellence of the sovereign herself (personified as Queen Nemesis), and exemplified her inestimable qualities, by making all the Virtues follow in her train as Maids of honour. A decree of this sovereign and council, in 1556, prohibited all players and pipers from strolling through the kingdom, as disseminators of seditions and heresies. King Edward had ordered the removal of the king's revels and masques from Warwick Inn, Holborn, "to the late dissolved house of Blackfriars, London," where considerable outlay was made for *scenery and machinery*. There still remained acting, a company at the Boar's Head, without Aldgate, where the actors had been playing a comedy, entitled a "Sack full of News." The Lord Mayor sent his officers to the theatre, and not only apprehended the comedians, but took their play-book from them and sent it to the privy council." The actors were under arrest for four-and-twenty hours, and were then set free, but under stipulation that they were to exercise their vocation of acting "between All Saints and Shrovetide" only; and they were bound to act no other plays but such as were approved of by the Ordinary.

The Blackfriars' monastery was not legally converted into a theatre till the year 1576. Mr. Collier says, in his life of Alleyn, that the first *public* theatre in England was opened about the year 1571; and that the "Curtain" was open before 1576. In this year the Earl of Leicester's servants were licensed to open their series of seasons in a house, the site of which is occupied by Apothecaries' Hall, and some adjacent buildings. At the head of the company was James Burbage, father of the original representative of *Richard III.*, and of *Hamlet*. Queen Elizabeth's afternoons at Windsor Castle and Richmond were made pleasant to her by the exertions of her players. The cost to her of occasional performances at the above residences during two years, amounted to a fraction over £444. As at Court, so also did the drama flourish at the Universities. At Cambridge, in 1566, the coarse dialect comedy, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*—a marvellous production, when considered as the work of a bishop, Still, of Bath and Wells—was represented amid a world of laughter.

On one occasion the stage was employed as a vantage ground, whereon to raise a battery against the power of the stage's great patroness, the Queen. In 1599, the indiscreet followers of Essex, says Mr. Hepworth Dixon, in his Life of Bacon, "filled the pit of the theatre, where Rutland and Southampton are daily seen, and where Shakspeare's company, in the great play of *Richard II.*, have, for more than a year, been feeding the public eye with pictures of the deposition of kings."

As early as 1577, a clergyman, Northbrooke, wrote against all "idle pastimes," and "vain plays" were therein included. In 1579, Gosson, the "parson" of St. Botolph's, discharged the first shot against stage plays which had yet been fired by any one not in absolute authority. Gosson's book was entitled, *A School of Abuse*, and it professed to contain "a pleasant invective against poets, players, jesters, and such like caterpillars of a Commonwealth." Gosson gaily limns the audiences of his time, but he makes out no great case against them or the actors. Elizabeth's face shone upon the latter. The number of the players, however, so increased, that the government, when Shakspeare was eight years of age, enacted that startling statute which is supposed to have branded dramatic art and artists with infamy. But the celebrated statute of 1572 does *not* declare players to be "rogues and vagabonds." It simply threatens to treat as such, all acting companies who presume to set up their stage *without* the license of "two justices of the peace at least." In 1576,

Elizabeth granted the first *royal* patent conceded in England to actors. By this authority, Lord Leicester's servants were empowered to produce such plays as seemed good to them, "as well," says the Queen, "for the recreation of our loving subjects as *for our solace and pleasure*, when we shall think good to see them." This patent sanctioned the acting of plays within the city; but against this the city magistrates commenced an active agitation. The players were treated as the devil's missionaries; and such unsavoury terms were flung at them and at playwrights, by the city aldermen and the county justices, that thereon was founded that animosity which led dramatic authors to represent citizens and justices as the most egregious of fools, the most arrant of knaves, and the most deluded of husbands. In 1580, some "godly citizens and well-disposed gentlemen of London," put such pressure on the aldermen, that ultimately all the city theatres, at inns in Gracechurch Street, Bishopsgate Street, Ludgate Hill and near St. Paul's were altogether suppressed. Those outside the city boundary were unmolested; and probably thereby English literature has been enriched by Shakspeare's works.

Driven from the city, Burbage and his gay brotherhood were safe in the shelter of Blackfriars, adjacent to the city walls. Safe, but neither welcome nor unmolested. The devout and noble ladies who had long resided near the once sacred building, clamoured at the audacity of the actors. Divine worship and sermon, as they averred, would be grievously disturbed by the music and rant of the comedians, and by the deboshed companions resorting to witness those abominable plays and interludes. This cry was unsuccessful. The Blackfriars' was patronised by a public whose favours were also solicited by those "sumptuous houses" the "Theatre" and the "Curtain" in Shoreditch. Public logicians reasoned thus. "The cause of plagues is sin, and the cause of sin are plays; therefore, the cause of plagues are plays." The players stood their ground; but they lacked discretion. They played in despite of legal prohibitions, and introduced forbidden subjects of state and religion upon their stage. Thence ensued suspensions for indefinite periods, severe supervision, when the suspension, was rescinded, and renewed transgression on the part of the reckless companies, even to the playing on a Sunday, in any locality where they conjectured there was small likelihood of their being followed by a warrant.

The most costly of the theatrical revels of King James took place at Whitehall, at Greenwich, or at Hampton Court, on

Sunday evenings. James also licensed Kirkham, Hawkins, Kendall and Payne, to train the queen's children of the revels, and to exercise them in playing within the Blackfriars' or elsewhere, all plays which had the sanction of old Samuel Danyell. His queen, Anne, was both actress and manager in the masques performed at court, the expenses of which often exceeded, indeed were ordered not to be limited, to £1000. Roving troops were licensed by this play-loving King to follow their vocation in stated places in the country, under certain restrictions for their tarrying and wending—a fortnight's residence in one town being the time limited, with injunction not to play "during church hours."

Then there were unlicensed satirical plays in unlicensed houses. Sir John Yorke, his wife and brothers, were fined and imprisoned, because of a scandalous play acted in Sir John's house, in favour of popery, and in derision of the King. The King was, moreover, assailed both in the pulpit by the clergy, and on the regular stage by the comedians of the metropolis. "The Queen," says Beaumont, "attends these representations, to enjoy the laugh against her husband."

The players could, in James's reign, boast that their profession was at least kindly looked upon by the foremost man in the English church. "No man," says Hacket, "was more wise or more serious than Archbishop Bancroft, the atlas of our clergy, in his time; and he that writes this hath seen an interlude well presented before him, at Lambeth, by his own gentlemen, when I was one of the youngest spectators." But in 1616, the pulpit once more issued anathemas against the stage. The denouncer was the preacher at St. Mary Overy's, named Sutton, whose censure was answered by the actor, Field. The comedian admits that what he calls his trade, had its corruptions, like other trades; but he adds, that since it is patronised by the King, there is disloyalty in preaching against it, and he hints that the theology of the preacher must be a little out of gear, seeing that he openly denounces a vocation which is not condemned in Scripture!

Field was one of the dozen actors to whom King James, in 1619, granted a license to act comedy, tragedy, &c., for the solace and pleasure of his Majesty and his subjects, at the Globe, and at their private house in the precincts of Blackfriars. Their success rendered them audacious, and, in 1624, they got into trouble, on a complaint of the Spanish Ambassador. The actors at the Globe had produced Middleton's "Game at Chess," in which the Reformed and Romanist parties were represented, but the

Spanish envoy's complaint was founded on the fact that the King of Spain, Gondomar, and the famous Antonio de Dominis, were satirized. On the ambassador's complaint, the play was suppressed, the actors forbidden to represent living personages on the stage, and the author was sent to prison.

The players, at Shrovetide, 1625, announced a play founded on the Dutch horrors at Amboyna, but the performance was stopped, on the application of the East India Company, "for fear of disturbances this Shrovetide." In the first year of Charles I., 1625, the "common players" have leave not only to act where they will, but "to come to court, now the plague is reduced to six." Accordingly, there was a merry Christmas season at Hampton Court, the actors being there; and, writes Rudyard to Nethercole, "the *demoiselles*" (maids of honour, doubtless), "mean to present a French pastoral, wherein the Queen is a principal actress."

When Bishop Williams, of Lincoln, retired to his episcopal palace at Buckden, says Hacket, "he was the worse thought of by some strict censurers, because he admitted in his public hall a comedy once or twice to be presented before him, exhibited by his own servants, for an evening recreation." This simple matter was exaggerated by his enemies into a report, that on an Ordination Sunday, he had entertained his newly-ordained clergy with a representation of Shakspeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream."

Of the primitive temples of our drama, the royal theatre, Blackfriars, was the most nobly patronised. The grown-up actors (described as "men of grave and sober behaviour") were the most skilled of their craft; and the boys, or apprentices, were the most fair and effeminate that could be procured, and could profit by instruction. Blackfriars was a winter house. The pit was "for the gentry," and, as at the Cockpit and Salisbury Court, the acting was by candle-light. The house was "private," that is, roofed in. The "public theatres" had roofing only over the stage and boxes. In 1655 it was pulled down, after a successful career of about three-quarters of a century. Upon the strip of shore, between Fleet Street and the Thames, there have been erected three theatres. In the year 1580, the old monastery of Whitefriars was given up to a company of players; but the Whitefriars' Theatre did not enjoy a lengthened career. In the year 1616, it had fallen into disrepute and decay, and was never afterwards used for the representation of dramatic pieces. The other theatres, in Dorset Gardens, were built subsequently to the Restoration.

In the parish of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, and in the street now called Playhouse Yard, stood the old *Fortune*, erected in 1600, for Henslowe, (the pawnbroker and money-lender to actors) and Alleyn, the most unselfish of comedians. It was a wooden tenement, which was burned down in 1621, and replaced by a circular brick edifice. In 1649, two years after the suppression of plays by the Puritan Act, a party of soldiers broke into the edifice, destroyed its interior fittings, and pulled down the building. The site and adjacent ground were soon covered by dwelling houses. Meanwhile, the inn yards, or great rooms at the inns, were not yet quite superseded. The Cross Keys in Gracechurch Street, the Bull in Bishopsgate Street, and the Red Bull, in St. John Street, Clerkenwell, which last existed as late as the period of the Great Fire, were open, if not for the acting of plays, at least for exhibitions of fencing and wrestling.

The Globe was on the old, joyous, Surrey Bankside; and the Little Rose, in 1584, there succeeded to an elder structure of the same name, whose memory is still preserved in Rose Alley. The Globe, the summer-house of Shakspeare and his fellows, flourished from 1594 to 1613, when it fell a prey to the flames caused by the wadding of a gun, which lodged in and set fire to the thatched roof. The new house, erected by subscription, was of wood, but it was tiled. In 1654, the owner of the freehold, Sir Matthew Brand, pulled the house down; and the name of Globe Alley is all that is left to point out the whereabout of the popular summer-house in Southwark.

On the same bank of the great river stood the Hope, a playhouse four times a week, and a garden, for bear-baiting on the alternate days. In the former was first played Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair." When plays were suppressed, the zealous and orthodox soldiery broke into the Hope, horse-whipped the actors, and shot the bears. This place, however, in its character of Bear Garden, rallied after the Restoration, and continued prosperous till nearly the close of the 17th century. Paris Garden was famous for its cruel but well patronised sports. Its popular circus was converted by Henslowe and Alleyn into a theatre. In Holywell Lane, Shoreditch, is the site of an old wooden structure which bore the distinctive name of "The Theatre." There was a second theatre in this district called "The Curtain," a name still retained in Curtain Road. This house remained open and successful, till the accession of Charles I.

With regard to the costume in use at the early houses, I am

inclined to think that it was splendid, and not more incorrect than in very recent times. Among nearly a hundred articles of dress in Alleyn's inventory, I note, "a scarlet cloak, with two broad gold laces, with gold buttons of the same down the sides, for Lear."—"A purple satin, welted with velvet and silver twist; Romeo's."—"Henry the Eighth's gown."—"Blue damask coat, for the Moor, in Venice,"—and "Spangled hose, in Pericles." Here are indications of costly and, probably, tasteful dresses, at least. In scenery, there was little attempted beyond the *traverses*, or curtains stretched across the stage, with the name of the locality of the scenè inscribed thereon. In the masques represented at Court, as early as King James's reign, scenery and machinery of a costly character were employed. A reference to the papers published by the Shakspeare Society will show how lavish the court stage was in this respect. Even in Cromwell's time, when a play was tolerated, on political grounds, the public spirit against the enemy was sustained by pictorial representations. But it was not till Davenant led the Duke's company, that scenery, as we now understand the word, was largely introduced, and made one of the *features* of the house. Since that period, when Evelyn praised the scenery of Streeter, there has been an accomplished run of scenic artists,—including the names of De Loutherbourg, Grieve, Greenwood, of David Roberts so lately departed, of Stanfield, and of two still active in creating delight, Telbin and William Beverley. While the old theatres still flourished, and when London was talking admiringly of the coronation of Charles I., there was a successor of Northbrooke and Gosson sending up his testimony against the abomination of plays and players, in *A short Treatise against Stage Plays*.

This paper pellet, short and sharp, had not long been printed, when the vexed author might have seen four actors sailing joyously along the Strand, *Master* Moore (there were no *managers* then), Foster, Guilman, and Townsend. The master carries in his pocket a royal licence to form a company, whose members, in honour of the King's sister, shall be known as "the Lady Elizabeth's servants." Fortune seemed to be blandly smiling on these "masters," when Prynne published (in 1633) his *Histrio-Mastix*, consisting of a thousand and several hundred pages. In this work, Prynne notes, with a cry of anguish, the printing of forty thousand plays within the last two years. "There are five devil's chapels," he says, "in London; and yet in more extensive Rome, in Nero's days, there were but three, and those," he adds, "were three too

many!" The assault was met by a defiance. The gentlemen of the Inns of Court closed their law-books, got up a masque, and played it at Whitehall. The play-loving lords followed the example afforded by the lawyers, and the King himself turned actor, for the nonce. The Rev. William Cartwright wrote the "Royal Slave." The King and Queen went to Oxford to witness its performance. All the actors played with spirit, but one displayed such judgment, and powers of execution, that King, Queen, and all the audience showered down upon him applauses—loud, and long. His name was Busby. Westminster was soon to possess him, for nearly threescore years, the most famous of her "masters." When Prynne, and Bastwick, and Burton—released from prison by the Long Parliament—entered London in triumph, with wreaths of ivy and rosemary round their hats, the players who stood on the causeway, or at tavern windows, to witness the passing of the victims, must have felt uneasy at their arch-enemy being loose again. Between politics, perverse parties, the plague, and the parliament, the condition of the actors fell from bad to worse At length arrived the year 1647, when the parliament disbanded the army and suppressed the players. A decree informed them that they were heathens; intolerable to Christians; incorrigible and vicious offenders, who would now be compelled by whip, and stocks, and gyves, and prison fare, to obey ordinances which they had hitherto treated with contempt. Mayors and sheriffs, and high and low constables were let loose upon them; menace was piled upon menace; money penalties were hinted at in addition to corporeal punishments, and, after all, plays were enacted in spite of this counter-enactment.

But the autumn saw accomplished what had not been effected in the spring. The *Perfect Weekly Account* for "Wednesday, Oct. 20, to Tuesday, Oct. 26," informs its readers that on "Friday an ordinance passed both Houses for suppressing of stage-plays, which of late began to come in use again."

The actors were all the more disliked by the republican government for their active support of the King. Hart held a commission, and Alleyn, erst of the Cockpit, filled the part of quartermaster-general to the King's army at Oxford. Burt became a cornet, Shatterel was something less dignified in the same branch of the service,—the cavalry. Record is made of the death of one player, Will Robinson, whom Harrison encountered in fight, and through whom he passed his terrible sword, shouting at the same time: "Cursed is he that doeth the work of the

Lord negligently!" Swanston, a player of Presbyterian tendencies, served in the Parliamentary army, but subsequently turned jeweller. Of the military fortunes of the actors none was so favourable as brave little Mohun's, who crossed to Flanders, returned a major, and was subsequently set down in the "cast" under his military title. Old Taylor retired, with that original portrait of Shakspeare to solace him, which was to pass, by the hands of Davenant, to "incomparable Betterton." Pollard, too, withdrew, and lusty Lowen, after a time, kicked sock and buskin out of sight, clapped on an apron, and appeared, with success, as landlord of the Three Pigeons, at Brentford!

In some of the streets by the river side a tragedy-king or two found refuge with kinsfolk. The old theatres stood desolate, and the owners, with hands in empty pockets, asked how they were to pay ground-rent, now that they earned nothing? whereas their afternoon-share used to be twenty—ay, thirty shillings, sir! And see, the flag is still flying above the old house over the water, and a lad who erst played under it, looks up at the banner with a proud sorrow. An elder actor puts his hands on the lad's shoulder, and cries: "Before the old scene is on again, boy, thy face will be as battered as the flag there on the roof-top!" And as this elder actor passes on, he has a word with a poor fellow-mime who has been less provident than he, and whose present necessities he relieves according to his means. Near them stand a couple of deplorable-looking "door-keepers," or "money-takers," and the ex-actor has his joke at their old rascality, and affects to condole with them that the time is gone by when they used to scratch their neck where it itched not, and then dropped shilling and half-crown pieces behind their collars! But they were not the only poor rogues who suffered by revolution. That slipshod tapster, whom a guest is cudgelling at a tavern-door, was once the most extravagantly-dressed of the tobacco-men, whose notice the smokers in the pit entreated, and who used to vend, at a penny the pipeful, tobacco that was not worth a shilling a cart-load. And behold other evidences of the hardness of the times! Those shuffling fiddlers who peer through the low windows into the tavern room, and meekly inquire: "Will you have any music, gentlemen?" they are relics of the band who were wont to shed harmony from the balcony above the stage, and play in fashionable houses, at the rate of ten shillings for each hour. *Now*, they shamble about in pairs, and accept the smallest dole, and think mournfully of the time when they heralded the com-

ing of kings, and softly tuned the dirge at the burying of Ophelia!

Even these have pity to spare for a lower class than themselves,—the journeymen playwrights, whom the managers once retained at an annual stipend and "beneficial second nights." The old playwrights were fain to turn pamphleteers, but their works sold only for a penny, and that is the reason why those two shabby-genteel people, who have just nodded sorrowfully to the fiddlers, are not joyously tippling sack and Gascony wine, but are imbibing unorthodox ale and heretical small beer. "*Cunctis graviora cothurnis!*" murmurs the old actor, whose father was a schoolmaster; "it's more pitiful than any of your tragedies!" Much amendment was promised by the actors, if only something of the old life might be pursued without peril of the stocks or the whipping-post. The authorities grimly smiled,—at the actors, who undertook to promote virtue; the poets, who engaged to be proper of speech; the managers, who bound themselves to prohibit the entrance of all temptations into "the sixpenny rooms;" and the tobacco-men, who swore with earnest irreverence, to vend nothing but the pure Spanish leaf, even in the threepenny galleries. A wit, author of "Certain Propositions offered to the consideration of the Honourable Houses of Parliament," suggested that the stage should not be abolished, but improved, and that scriptural plays should be licensed. The story of Joseph, he said, would make ladies weep: that of David and his troubles would suit the times, and "Susannah and the Elders" might be attractive to certain of the pure-minded. It was added, that a psalm might take place of the music between the acts!

The tragedy which ended with the killing of the King gave sad hearts to the comedians. One or two contrived to print and sell old plays for their own benefit; a few authors continued to add a new piece, now and then, to the stock, and some actors united boldness with circumspection. Richard Cox, dropping the words *play* and *player*, constructed a mixed entertainment in which he spoke and sang. During the suppression, Cowley's "Guardian" was privately played at Cambridge. A first-rate troop obtained possession of the Cockpit for a few days, in 1648. They were in the very midst of the "Bloody Brother," when the house was invaded by the Puritan soldiery, the actors captured, the audience dispersed, and the seats and the stage smashed into fragments.

Then Rhodes, the old prompter at Blackfriars, turned bookseller, and opened a shop at Charing Cross. There, he and one Betterton, an ex-under-cook in the kitchen of Charles I., who lived in Tothill Street, talked mournfully over the past, and, according to their respective humours, of the future. The cook's sons listened the while, and one of them especially took delight in hearing old stories of players, and in cultivating an acquaintance with the old theatrical bookseller. In the neighbourhood of the ex-prompter's shop, knots of slender players used to congregate at certain seasons. A delegate from their number might be seen whispering to the citizen captain in command at Whitehall, who consented, for a "consideration," not to bring his redcoats down to the Bull or other localities where private stages were erected, especially during the time of Bartholomew Fair, Christmas, and other joyous tides. The cause of the actors, however, found supporters in many of the members of the aristocracy. Close at hand, near Rhodes's shop, lived Lord Hatton. In him the players had a supreme patron. Noblemen and gentlemen residing a few miles from the capital opened their houses for stage representations. One of the mansions wherein these dramatic entertainments were most frequently given, was Holland House, Kensington. When the play was over, a collection was made among the noble spectators, whose contributions were divided between the players, according to the measure of their merits. This done, they wended their way down the avenue to the high road, where probably, on some bright summer afternoon, if a part of them prudently returned afoot to town, a joyous few "padded it" to Brentford, and made a short but glad night of it with their brother of the "Three Pigeons." Towards the close of Cromwell's time Davenant performed his operas in, or at the back of, the house that had belonged to the earls of Rutland, in Charterhouse Square. Cromwell consented to these musical representations, at the request of Whitelocke. In May, 1659, Evelyn listened to one of these operas, and wondered that, in such time of terror or suspense, they were tolerated! Important changes were at hand, and the merry rattle of Monk's drums coming up Gray's Inn Road, welcomed by thousands of dusty spectators, announced no more cheering prospect to any class than to the actors. The Oxford vintner's son, Davenant, might be seen bustling about in happy hurry, eagerly showing young Betterton how Taylor used to play Hamlet, under the instruction of Burbage, and announcing bright days to open-

mouthed Kynaston, ready at a moment's warning to leap over his master's counter, and take his standing at the balcony as the smooth-cheeked Juliet. Meanwhile, old Rhodes took his way to Hyde Park, where Monk was encamped, and obtained from that far-seeing individual licence to revive the English theatre. In a few days the drama commenced its new career in the Tennis Court, in Vere Street, and the Cockpit, in Drury Lane; and our stage owes this fact to the liberality of Monk and the energy of Rhodes. The former restored the stage as well as the monarchy, and Rhodes inaugurated the restoration of the former, by introducing young Betterton, who was for fifty-one years the pride of the English theatre.

CHAPTER II.

THE "BOY ACTRESSES," AND THE "YOUNG LADIES."

At the Cockpit (Pit Street remains a memory of the place), otherwise called the Phœnix, in Drury Lane, the old English actors had uttered their last words before they were silenced. In a new building near the old site, the young English actors, under Rhodes, built their new stage, and wooed the willing town. After an unsettled course of nearly four years, Charles II., in 1663, granted patents for two theatres, and no more, in London. Under one patent, Killigrew, at the head of the King's company, opened at the new theatre in Drury Lane, in April, 1663, with the "Humourous Lieutenant," of Beaumont and Fletcher. Under the second patent, Davenant and the Duke of York's company found a home,—first at the old Cockpit, then in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street, the building of which was commenced in 1660, on the site of the old granary of Salisbury house, which had served for a theatre in the early years of the reign of Charles I. This little stage was lapped up by the Great Fire, in 1666. Davenant and the Duke's troop had previously gone to the old Tennis Court, (where as early as 1661, Evelyn saw the "Scornful Lady" acted,) the first of the three theatres on the south side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, from which the houses took their name. By the terms of the patents, despotic authority was given to the "governors" over the actors. If a player left or was discharged from one house, he could not be engaged at the other, till after the lapse of a year. Sir H. Herbert, Master of the Revels, suppressed all unlicensed companies, and even proceeded against the patentees for opening their theatres before all the legal preliminaries had been completed. There was a French company also in London. In 1661, £300 was given to M. Channoyeux, as the King's bounty to the French comedians, and in

1663, a *pass* was granted to them to bring over new scenes and decorations.

Oldys speaks of a brother of Shakspeare who had survived to this period, and who often visited the actors, by whom he was much questioned touching the poet. "But he, it seems, was so stricken in years, and possibly his memory so weakened by infirmities (which might make him the easier pass for a man of weak intellects), that he could give them but little light into their inquiries; and all that could be recollected from him of his brother *Will* in that station, was the faint, general, and almost lost ideas, he had of having once seen him act a part in one of his own comedies, wherein being to personate a decrepit old man, he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping, and unable to walk, that he was forced to be supported and carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of them sung a song." This description applies to old Adam, in "As You Like It;" but it is doubtful if he who feebly shadowed it forth, and formed a link which connected the old theatre with the new, was a brother of Shakspeare; Richard died in 1613; Edmund, the player, in 1607, and Gilbert is *supposed* to have predeceased William.

The principal actors in Killigrew's company, included Burt, Cartwright, Clun, Hart, Lacy, and Mohun. Later additions gave to this company Kynaston, "Scum" Goodman, Griffin, Haines, and Joe Harris. It was also supplied, as was Davenant's company, with young recruits from the nursery, or school for players, which Legg founded by license, in 1664.

The chief "ladies" were Mrs. Corey, Hughes, Knip, the Marshalls (Anne and Rebecca), and later, Mrs. Boutel, Gwyn (Nell), and Reeves. These were sworn at the Lord Chamberlain's Office to serve the King. Of the "gentlemen," ten were enrolled on the Royal Household Establishment, and provided with liveries of scarlet cloth and silver lace. In the warrants of the Lord Chamberlain they were styled "*Gentlemen* of the Great Chamber."

The company sworn to serve the Duke of York, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, included Betterton, Nokes, and six lads employed to represent female characters,—Angel, William Betterton, a brother of the great actor (drowned early in life, at Wallingford), Kynaston, and Nokes (James). Later, Davenant added Harris, Price, Medbourn, Norris, Sandford, Smith, and Young. The chief actresses were Mrs. Davenport, Holden, Jennings, and

Mrs. Saunderson, whom Betterton shortly after married. This new fashion of actresses was a French fashion. A French company, with women among them, came over to London, in Charles the First's reign. Hoping for the sanction of their countrywoman, Queen Henrietta Maria, they established themselves in Blackfriars. Prynne called these actresses by very unsavory names; but in styling them "unwomanish and graceless," he did not mean to imply that they were awkward and unfeminine, but that acting was unworthy of their sex, and unbecoming women born in an era of grace. "Glad am I to say," remarks another Puritan, Thomas Brand, in a comment addressed to Laud, "They were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage." More sober thinking people did not fail to see the propriety of Juliet being represented by a girl rather than by a boy. Accordingly, we hear of English actresses even before the Restoration, mingled, however, with boys who shared with them that "line of business." "The boy's a pretty actor," says Lady Strangelove, in the "Court Beggar," played at the Cockpit, in 1632, "and his mother can play her part. The women now are in great request." Nevertheless, when Rhodes was permitted to re-open the stage, he could only assemble boys about him for his Evadnes, Aspasias, and the other heroines of ancient tragedy. Now, the resumption of the practice of "women's parts being represented by men in the habits of women," gave offence, and in the first patents Killigrew and Davenant were authorised to employ actresses to represent all female characters. Killigrew was the first to avail himself of the privilege. It was time. Some of Rhodes's "boys" were men past forty, who frisked it as wenches of fifteen; even real kings were kept waiting because theatrical queens had not yet shaved. The lady who first trod the stage as a professional actress, belonged to Killigrew's company. The character she assumed was Desdemona, she was introduced by a prologue written by Thomas Jordan, and the actress was, probably, either Anne Marshall or Margaret Hughes. On the 3rd of January, 1661, Beaumont and Fletcher's "Beggar's Bush" was performed at Killigrew's Theatre, "it being very well done," says Pepys, "and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." Davenant did not bring forward *his* actresses before the end of June, 1661, when he produced the second part of the "Siege of Rhodes," with Mrs. Davenport as Roxalana, and Mrs. Saunderson as Ianthe. Killigrew abused his privilege to employ ladies. In 1664, his comedy, the "Parson's

Wedding," wherein the plague is made a comic incident, connected with unexampled profligacy, was acted. "I am *told*," are Pepys' words, "by nothing but women, at the King's house."

There were three members of the King's company, who were admirable representatives of female characters before the Civil Wars. These were Hart, Burt, and Clun, pupils of luckless Robinson, slain in fight, who was himself an accomplished "actress." Hart's Duchess, in Shirley's "Cardinal," was the best of his youthful parts. After the Restoration, he was almost as great in the Moor, as Betterton. His Alexander, which he *created*, had a dignity which was said to convey a lesson even to kings. His Brutus was scarcely inferior, and his Catiline was so unapproachable, that Jonson's tragedy died with him. Rymer styles him and Mohun, the Æsopus and Roscius of their time. When they acted together (Amintor and Melantius) in the "Maid's Tragedy," the town asked no greater treat. Hart was a man whose presence delighted the eye, before his accents enchanted the ear. The humblest character entrusted to him was distinguished by careful study. On the stage he acknowledged no audience; their warmest applause could never draw him into a moment's forgetfulness of his assumed character. His salary was, at the most, three pounds a week, but he realised £1,000 yearly, after he became a shareholder in the theatre. He retired in 1682, on a pension amounting to half his salary, which he enjoyed, however, scarcely a year. He died of a painful inward complaint in 1683, and was buried at Stanmore Magna.

Burt acted Cicero with rare ability, in "Catiline," for the getting up of which piece Charles II. contributed £500 for robes. Clun's Iago was superior to Mohun's, and as Subtle, in the "Alchymist," he was the admiration of all play-goers. After acting this comic part, Clun made a tragic end on the night of the third of August, 1664. With a lady on his arm, and some liquor under his belt, he was gaily passing on his way to his country lodgings in Kentish Town, when he was assailed, murdered, and flung into a ditch. "The house will have a great miss of him," is the epitaph of Pepys upon versatile Clun.

Of the boys belonging to Davenant's Company, who at first appeared in woman's boddice, Kynaston and James Nokes long survived to occupy prominent positions on the stage. Kynaston made "the lovliest lady," for a boy, ever beheld by Pepys. This was in 1660, when Kynaston played Olympia, in the "Loyal Subject." On the 7th of January, 1661, says Pepys, "Tom and

I, and my wife, to the theatre, and there saw "The Silent Woman." Among other things here, Kynaston, the boy, had the good turn to appear in three shapes. First, as a poor woman, in ordinary clothes, to please Morose; then, in fine clothes as a gallant—and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house; and lastly, as a man, and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house." When the play was concluded, and it was not the lad's humour to carouse with the men, the ladies would seize on him, in his theatrical dress, and, carrying him to Hyde Park in their coaches, be foolishly proud of the precious freight which they bore with them. There was another handsome man, Sir Charles Sedley, whose style of dress the young actor aped; and his presumption was punished by a ruffian, hired by the baronet, who accosted Kynaston in St. James's Park, as "Sir Charles," and thrashed him in that character. The actor then mimicked Sir Charles on the stage. A consequence was, that on the 30th of January, 1669, Kynaston was waylaid by three or four assailants, and so clubbed by them, that there was no play on the following evening; and the victim, mightily bruised, was forced to keep his bed. Kynaston retained a certain beauty to the last. "Even at past sixty," Cibber tells us, "his teeth were all sound, white, and even as one would wish to see in a reigning toast of twenty." Colley attributes the gravity of Kynaston's mien "to the stately step he had been so early confined to in a female decency." The same writer praises Kynaston's Leon, in "Rule a Wife and have a Wife," for its determined manliness and honest authority. In the heroic tyrants, his piercing eye, his quick, impetuous tone, and the fierce, lion-like majesty of his bearing and utterance, "gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration."

The true majesty of his Henry IV. was so manifest, that when he whispered to Hotspur, "Send us your prisoners, or you'll hear of it," he conveyed, says Cibber, "a more terrible menace in it than the loudest intemperance of voice could swell to." Again, in the interview between the dying King and his son, the dignity, majestic grief, the paternal affection, the injured, kingly feeling, the pathos and justness of the rebuke, were alike remarkable. Kynaston remained on the stage from 1659 to 1699. His memory began to fail and his spirit to leave him. Kynaston was the original Count Baldwin, in "Isabella." He was the greatest of "boy-actresses." So exalted was his reputation, "that," says Downes, "it has since been disputable among the judicious,

whether any woman that succeeded him, so sensibly touched the audience as he." He died in 1712.

Kynaston's contemporary, James Nokes, was as prudent and as fortunate as he; but James was not so well-descended. Nokes's father (and he himself for a time) was a city toyman, not so well to do, but he allowed his sons to go on the stage, where Robert was, to the last night of his career, famous for his impersonation of the Nurse in two plays; first, in that strange adaptation by Otway, of "Romeo and Juliet" to a Roman tragedy, "Caius Marius;" and secondly, in Nevil Payne's fierce drama, "Fatal Jealousy." Cibber thus photographs him for the entertainment of posterity.

"He scarce ever made his first entrance in a play but he was received with an involuntary applause; not of hands only, but by a general laughter, which the very sight of him provoked, and nature could not resist; yet the louder the laugh the graver was his look upon it: and sure the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops into a titter, could he have been honoured (may it be no offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend auditors. In the ludicrous distresses which, by the laws of comedy folly is often involved in, he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity, and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot point whether you ought not to have pitied him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb, studious pout, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content as the most absurd thing he could say upon it."

In May, 1670, Charles II., and troups of courtiers, went down to Dover to meet the Queen-mother, and took with them the Lincoln's-Inn-Fields comedians. When Henrietta Maria arrived, with her suite of French ladies and gentlemen, the latter attired, according to the prevailing fashion, in very short blue or scarlet laced coats, with broad sword belts, the English comedians played before the royal host and his guests, the play, founded on Molière's "Ecole des Femmes," and called "Sir Solomon." Nokes acted Sir Arthur Addel, in dressing for which part he was assisted by the Duke of Monmouth. In order that he might the better ape the French mode, the duke took off his own sword and belt, and buckled them to the actor's side. At his first entrance on the

stage, King and Court broke into unextinguishable laughter, so admirably were the foreign guests caricatured; at which outrage on courtesy and hospitality, the guests, naturally enough, "were much chagrined," says Downes. Nokes retained the duke's sword and belt to his dying day, which fell in the course of the year 1692.

The first name of importance on the list of actresses at the Theatre Royal, is that of Mrs. Hughes, who, on the stage from 1663 to 1676, was more remarkable for her beauty than for great ability. For her, in 1668, Prince Rupert left his laboratory, put aside his reserve, and wooed in due form the proudest of the actresses of her day. Only in the May of that year Pepys had saluted her with a kiss, in the green-room of the King's house. She was then reputed to be the intimate favourite of Sir Charles Sedley: "A mighty pretty woman," says Pepys, "and seems, but is not, modest." The frail beauty well-nigh ruined her lover, at whose death there was little left beside a collection of jewels, worth £20,000. which were disposed of by lottery, in order to pay his debts.

Mrs. Knipp was a pretty creature, with a sweet voice, a mad humour, and a jealous husband, who vexed the soul and bruised the body of his sprightly and wayward wife. Excellent company she was found by Pepys and his friends, but Mrs. Pepys did not hesitate to call "wench," one whom Pepys himself speaks of affectionately as a "jade," he was always glad to see. Of the home of an actress, in 1666, we have a sketch in the record of a visit in November, "To Knipp's lodgings, whom I find not ready to go home with me; and there staid reading of Waller's verses, while she finished dressing, her husband being by. Her lodging very mean, and the condition she lives in; yet makes a show without doors, God bless us!" Mrs. Knipp disappears from the bills in 1678.

Of Anne and Rebecca Marshall, Stephen Marshall the divine is said to have been the father! It is hardly possible to believe that such a saint was the father of the two beautiful actresses whom Nell Gwyn taunted with being the erring daughters of a "praying Presbyterian." Pepys says of Anne Marshall, that her voice was "not so sweet as Ianthe's," meaning Mrs. Betterton's. Rebecca had a beautiful hand, was very imposing on the stage, and even off of it was "mighty fine, pretty, and noble." The only other actress of the King's company worth mentioning is Nell Gwyn (or, Margaret Symcott, as some say was her real name). In Hereford city, a mean house in the rear of the Oak

Inn is pointed out as the place of her birth. Nelly was born in 1650; and tradition states that she very early ran away from her country home to town, and studied for the stage by going every night to the play. I suspect Coal Yard, Drury Lane, was her first bower, that thence she issued to cry "fresh herrings!" and passed, from being hander of strong waters to the gentlemen who patronized Madame Ross's house, to taking her place in the pit, with her back to the orchestra, and selling oranges and pippins, with pertinent wit, gratis, to liberal fops who would buy the first and return the second with interest. Lacy gave her instruction, and from Charles Hart she took that and all the love he could pay her. Under the auspices of Hart, Nelly made her first appearance at the (King's) theatre, in Cydaria, in the "Indian Emperor." For tragedy she was unfitted: her stature was low, though her figure was graceful; and it was not till she assumed comic characters, stamped the smallest foot in England on the boards, and laughed with that peculiar laugh that, in the excess of it, her eyes almost disappeared, she enslaved the hearts of city and of court. She spoke prologues and epilogues with wonderful effect, danced to perfection, and was, perhaps, unequalled for the natural feeling which she put into the parts most suited to her. She was so fierce of repartee that no one ventured a second time to allude sneeringly to her antecedents. She was coarse, too, when the humour took her; could curse pretty strongly if the house was not full, and was given to loll about and talk loudly in the public boxes, when she was not engaged on the stage. She left both stage and boxes for a time, in 1667, to keep mad house at Epsom with the clever Lord Buckhurst, a man who for one youthful vice exhibited a thousand manly virtues. When she followed Buckhurst to Epsom, and flung up her parts and an honestly-earned salary for a poor £100 a-year, Pepys exclaims, "Poor girl! I pity her; but more the loss of her at the King's house." Her own party hailed her return after a year's absence; but she did not light upon a bed of roses. Lady Castlemaine was no longer her patroness, rather that and more of Nelly's old lover, Hart, who flouted the ex-favourte of Buckhurst. That ex-favourite, however, bore with equal indifference the scorn of Charles Hart and the contempt of Charles Sackville; she saw compensation for both, in the homage of Charles Stuart. Meanwhile, she continued to enchant the town in comedy, to "spoil" serious parts, and yet to act with great success characters, in which natural emotion, bordering on insanity, was to be repre-

sented. Early in 1668, we find her among the loose companions of King Charles; "and I am sorry for it," says Pepys. The last of her original characters was Almahide, in Dryden's "Conquest of Granada," the prologue to which she spoke in a straw hat as broad as a cart-wheel, and thereby almost killed the King with laughter. In this piece, her old lover, Hart, played Almanzor; and his position with respect to King Boabdelin (Kynaston) and Almahide (Nelly) corresponds with that in which he stood towards King Charles and the actress. The passages reminding the audience of this complex circumstance threw the house into "convulsions." From this time, Ellen Gwyn disappears from the stage. A similar surname appears in the play-bills from 1670 to 1682; but there is no ground for believing that the "Madam Gwyn" of the later period was the Mrs. Ellen of the earlier, poorer, and merrier times. Nelly's first son, Charles Beauclerc, was born in her house, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in May, 1670; her second, in the following year, at her house in Pall Mall, the garden terrace of which overlooked the then green walk in the park, from which Evelyn saw, with shame, the King talking with the impudent "comedian." Of this incident, the friend to whom these pages are dedicated, has made an exquisite picture. Nelly's younger son, James, died at Paris, 1680. The elder had Otway for a tutor. In his sixth year he was created Earl of Burford, and in his fourteenth Duke of St. Albans, with the registrarship of the High Court of Chancery, and the office (rendered hereditary) of Master Falconer of England. The King had demurred to a request to settle £500 a-year on this lady, and yet within four years she exacted from him above £60,000. Subsequently, £6,000, annually, were tossed to her from the Excise,—that hardest taxation of the poor,—and £3,000 more were added for the expenses of her son. She blazed at Whitehall, with diamonds out-flashing those usually worn, as Evelyn has it, "by the like cattle." At Burford House, Windsor, her gorgeous country residence, she could gaily lose £1,400 in one night at basset, and purchase diamond necklaces the next day, at fabulous prices. Negligent dresser, as she was, she always looked fascinating; and fascinating as she was, she had a ready fierceness and a bitter sarcasm at hand, when other royal favourites or sons of favourites, or even princes, assailed or sneered at her. By impulse, she could be charitable; but by neglecting the claims of her own creditors, she was cruel. Charles, on his death-bed, recommended those shameless women, Cleveland and Portsmouth,

to his brother's kindness, and hoped James would "not let Nelly starve." An apocryphal story attributes the founding of Chelsea Hospital to Nelly's tenderness for a poor old wounded soldier who had been cheated of his pay. The dedications to her of books by such people as Aphra Behn and Duffet are blasphemous in their expressions, making of her a sort of divine essence, and becoming satirical by their disgusting eulogy. For such a person, the pure and pious Kenn was once called upon to yield up an apartment in which he lodged, and the peerage had a narrow escape of having her foisted upon it as Countess of Greenwich. This clever actress died in November, 1687, of a fit of apoplexy, by which she had been stricken in the previous March. She was then in her thirty-eighth year. She had been endowed like a princess, but she left debts, and died just in time to allow James to discharge them out of the public purse! Finally, she was carried to old St. Martin's-in-the-Fields to be buried, and Tennison preached her funeral sermon. When this was subsequently made the ground of exposing him to the reproof of Queen Mary, she remarked, that the good doctor, no doubt, had said nothing but what the facts authorised.

In the time of Nelly's most brilliant fortunes, the people who laughed at her wit and impudence publicly contemned her. In February, 1680, she visited the Duke's Theatre, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on which occasion a person in the pit called her loudly by a name which, to do her justice, she never repudiated. The affront, which she could laugh at, was taken up by Thomas Herbert, brother of Philip, Earl of Pembroke, whom he succeeded. The audience took part, some with the assailant, others with the champion of Nelly. Many swords were drawn, the sorrows of the "Orphan" were suspended, there was a hubbub in the house, and more scratches given than blood spilt.

Let us now turn from the ladies of the Theatre Royal to those of the Duke's House, under Davenant. Chief among these were Mistresses Davenport, Davies, and Saunderson. Mrs. Davenport was the Roxalana of Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes," which she played so well that Pepys could not forget her in either of her successors, Mrs. Betterton or Mrs. Norton.

Aubrey de Vere, the twentieth Earl of Oxford, kept a roysstering house, and was addicted to hard drinking, and unseemly brawling, in his cups. He made love, after the fashion of the day, to Mrs. Davenport; but it was not till he proposed marriage that the actress condescended to listen to his suit. The

lovers were privately married, and the lady was, in the words of old Downes, "crept the stage." The honeymoon, however, was speedily obscured; Lord Oxford grew indifferent and brutal. When the lady talked of her rights, he informed her that she was not Countess of Oxford at all. The apparent reverend gentleman who had performed the ceremony of marriage was a trumpeter, who served under this very lord in the King's own regiment of cavalry. The forlorn fair one, after threatening suicide, sought out the King, fell at his feet, and demanded justice, The award was made in the shape of an annuity of £300 a year, with which "Lord Oxford's Miss" seems to have been satisfied and consoled; for Pepys, soon after, being at the play, "saw the old Roxalana in the chief box, in a velvet gown, as the fashion is, and very handsome, at which I was glad."

As for Mary Davies, it is uncertain whether she was the daughter of a Wiltshire blacksmith, or the less legitimate offspring of Thomas Howard, the first Earl of Berkshire, or of the earl's son, the colonel. Mary Davies was early on the stage, where she danced well, played moderately ill, announced the next afternoon's performance with grace, and won an infamous distinction at the King's hands, by her inimitable singing of the old song, "My lodging is on the cold ground." Then there was the publicly furnishing of a house for her, and the presentation of a ring worth £600, and much scandal to good and honest women. Thereupon Lady Castlemaine waxed melancholy, and the patient Queen herself was moved to anger. But neither the offended dignity of the Queen, nor Lady Castlemaine "looking fire," nor the dirty practical jokes of Nell Gwyn, could loose the King from the temporary enchantment to which he surrendered himself. Their daughter was that Mary Tudor, who married the second Earl of Derwentwater. Through the marriage of their granddaughter with the eighth Lord Petre, the blood of the Stuart and of "Moll Davies" still runs in their descendant, the present, and twelfth, lord.

Miss Saunderson, better known to us as Mrs. Betterton, played the chief female characters, especially in Shakspeare's plays, with great success. In Lady Macbeth, even Mrs. Barry could not equal her. When Crowne's "Calista" was to be played at court in 1674, she was chosen to be instructress to the Lady Mary and the Lady Anne. These princesses derived from Mrs. Betterton's lessons the accomplishment for which both were distinguished when queens, of pronouncing speeches in a clear voice, with

sweetness of intonation, and grace of enunciation. Mrs. Betterton subsequently instructed the Princess Anne in the part of Semandra, and her husband did the like office for the young noblemen who played in Lee's rattling tragedy of "Mithridates." After Betterton's death, Queen Anne settled on her old teacher of elocution a pension of £500 a year

Let us now pass from these ladies to the "gentlemen of the King's Company."

CHAPTER III.

THE GENTLEMEN OF THE KING'S COMPANY.

THE first names of importance in the King's company are those of Lacy and Mohun, comedian and tragedian. Lacy was a great Falstaff. His triple portrait, painted by Wright, is at Hampton Court. He had been a dancing-master, then a lieutenant in the army. He was handsome in shape and feature, and was the original Teague, in the "Committee;" a play of Howard's, subsequently cut down to the farce of "Killing, no Murder." In 1671, taught by Buckingham, and mimicking Dryden, he startled the town with his Bayes, in the "Rehearsal;" a part so full of happy opportunities that it was coveted or essayed for many years, not only by great actors, but by many an actress, too; and last of all by William Farren, in 1819.

Evelyn styles him "Roscius." Frenchman, or Scot or Irishman, fine gentleman or fool, rogue or honest simpleton, Tartuffe or Drench, old man or loquacious woman,—in all, Lacy was the delight of the town for about a score of years. His wardrobe was a spectacle which gentlemen of curiosity went to see. He took enjoyment in parts which enabled him to rail at the rascalities of courtiers. Sometimes this licence went too far. In Howard's "Silent Woman," the sarcasms reached the King, and moved his majesty to wrath, and to locking up Lacy in the Porter's Lodge. After a few days' detention, he was released; whereupon, Howard congratulated him. Lacy abused the poet for the nonsense he had put into the part of Captain Otter, which was the cause of all the mischief; and he further told Howard, he was "more a fool than a poet." Thereat, the honourable Edward, raising his glove, smote Lacy over the face. Jack retaliated, by lifting his cane and letting it descend smartly on the pate of a man who was cousin to an earl. Ordinary men marvelled, that the honour-

able Edward did not run Jack through the body. Howard hastened to the King, lodged his complaint, and the house was ordered to be closed. The gentry rejoiced at the silencing of the company, as those clever fellows and their fair mates were growing, as that gentry thought, "too insolent." The King's favour restored the actor to health; and Lacy remained Charles's favourite comedian till his death, in 1681. One cannot look on Mohun's portrait, at Knowle, without pleasure and respect. That long-haired young fellow wears so frank an aspect, and the hand holds the sword so delicately yet so firmly! He is the very man who might "rage like Cethegus, or like Cassius die." Lee could never willingly write a play without a part for Mohun, who, with Hart, was accounted among the good actors that procured profitable "third days" for authors. No Maximin could defy the gods as Mohun did; and there has been no franker Clytus since the day he originally represented the character in "Alexander the Great." In some parts he contested the palm with Betterton, whose versatility he rivalled. Of his modesty, I know no better trait than what passed when Nat. Lee had read to him a part which Mohun was to fill in one of Lee's tragedies. The Major put aside the manuscript, in a sort of despair—"Unless I could play the character as beautifully as you read it," said he, "it were vain to try it at all!"

Among the men who subsequently joined the Theatre Royal, passing over "respectable" actors, like Cartwright, I come to that great rogue, Cardell Goodman, whose career lasted from 1677. His popular parts were Julius Cæsar and Alexander. He came to the theatre hot from a fray at Cambridge University, whence he had been expelled for slashing the portrait of that exemplary Chancellor, the Duke of Monmouth. This rogue and Griffin shared the same bed in their modest lodging, and having but one shirt between them, wore it in turn! The only dissension which ever occurred between them was caused by Goodman, who, having to pay a visit to a lady, clapped on the shirt when it was clean, and Griffin's day for wearing it! For restricted means every gentleman of spirit had a resource in "the road," and Cardell Goodman took to it with alacrity. But he came to grief, and found himself, with gyves on, in Newgate; yet he escaped the cart, the rope, and Tyburn. King James gave "his Majesty's servant" his life, and Cardell returned to the stage—a hero. A middle-aged duchess adopted him as a lover, and Goodman had fine quarters, rich feeding, and a dainty wardrobe, at the cost of

Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland. "*Scum* Goodman" was proud of his degradation, and paid such homage to "*my* duchess," as he called her, that when he expected her presence in the theatre, he would not go on the stage, though king and queen were kept waiting, till he heard that "his duchess" was in the house. He cared for no other applause, so long as her Grace's fan signalled approbation. Scum was not only fool, but knave. A couple of the Duchess's children annoyed him, and Scum suborned an Italian quack to dispose of them by poison. A discovery, before the attempt was made, brought Scum to trial for misdemeanour. A heavy fine crippled him for life. He hung about the stage after he withdrew from it as an actor. He looked in at rehearsals, and seeing a likely lad, named Cibber, going through the little part of the Chaplain, in the "Orphan," one spring morning of 1690, Scum loudly wished he might be,—what he very much deserved to be,—if the young fellow did not turn out a good player. King James having saved Cardell's neck, Goodman became a Tory, and something more, when William sat in the seat of his father-in-law. Scum was in the Fenwick plot to kill the King. When the plot was discovered, Scum was ready to peach. Fenwick's life was thought to be safe if Goodman could be bought off. Scum consented to accept £500 a-year, and a residence abroad. He then disappeared, and Lord Manchester, our Ambassador in Paris, inquired after him in vain. It is impossible to say whether the rogue died by an avenging hand, or starvation.

Joseph Haines! "Joe," with his familiars, was a ready wit, and an admirable low comedian, from 1672 to 1701. We first hear of him at a school in St. Martin's in-the-Fields, whence he was sent to Queen's College, Oxford. There Haines met with Williamson, the Sir Joseph of after days, distinguished for his scholarship, and his abilities as a statesman. Williamson made Haines his Latin secretary when the former was appointed Secretary of State. But Joe gosipped in joyous companies, and revealed the mysteries of diplomacy. Williamson parted with his indiscreet "servant," but sent him to recommence fortune-making at Cambridge. Here, again, his waywardness ruined him for a professor. A strolling company at Stourbridge Fair seduced him from the groves of Academus,* and in a short time this foolish and clever fellow was the delight of the Drury Lane audiences, and the favoured guest in the noblest society where

* Other accounts say that he commenced his theatrical life early, at the "Nursery."

mirth, humour, and dashing impudence were welcome. In 1673, his Sparkish, in the "Country Wife," was accepted as the type of the airy gentlemen of the day. His acting on, and his jokes off, the stage were the themes in all coteries and coffee-houses. He was a great practical jester, and once engaged a simple-minded clergyman as "Chaplain to the Theatre Royal," and sent him behind the scenes, ringing a bell, and calling the players to prayers! When Romanism was looking up, under James II., Haines had the impudence to announce to the convert Sunderland his adoption of the King's religion, being moved thereto by the Virgin, who had appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joe, arise!" Sunderland drily observed that "she would have said '*Joseph*,' if only out of respect for her husband!" The rogue subsequently recanted, not in the church, but on the stage; he, the while, covered with a sheet, holding a taper, and delivering some stupid rhymes, to the very dullest of which he had the art of giving wonderful expression by his accent, emphasis, modulation, and felicity of application. His great part was Captain Bluff in Congreve's "Old Bachelor." The self-complaisant way in which he used to utter "Hannibal was a very pretty fellow in his day," was universally imitated, and has made the phrase proverbial. His Roger, in "Esop," was another of his successes, the bright roll of which was crowned by his irresistible Tom Errand, in Farquhar's "Constant Couple,"—that most triumphant comedy of a whole century. Haines took liberties with his audiences. When Hart cast Joe for the simple part of a Senator, in "Catiline," in which Hart played the hero, Joe spoiled Hart's best point, by sitting behind him, absurdly attired, and making grimaces at the grave actor of Catiline; which kept the house in a roar of laughter. Hart could not be provoked to depart from his character; but as soon as he made his *exit*, he sent Joe his dismissal. Haines, then, alternated between the stage and the houses of his patrons. "Vivitur ingenio," the stage-motto, was also his, and he added to his means by acting the jester's part in noble circles. He was no mere "fool." Scholars might respect a "classic," like Haines, and travelling lords gladly hire, as a companion, a witty fellow, who knew two or three living languages as familiarly as he did his own. Haines died at his house in Hart Street, Covent Garden, then a fashionable locality, on the 4th of April, 1701. His friend and brother actor, Mat Coppinger, is the only actor who ever came to be hanged. Mat was the author of a volume of loose

poems, dedicated to the loose Countess of Portsmouth. One night, after acting a Judge, he took to the road, robbed a man of a watch and £7, and was hanged for it, to the great indignation of the town; but

> "Mat did not go dead, like a sluggard to bed,
> But boldly in his shoes, died of a noose,
> That he found under Tyburn tree."

At the head of the Duke's company, to which we now pass, was Thomas Betterton, whose merits claim a chapter for himself.

CHAPTER IV.

THOMAS BETTERTON.

On a December night, 1661, there is a crowded house at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The play is "Hamlet," with young Mr. Betterton, who has been two years on the stage, in the part of the Dane. The Ophelia is the real object of the young fellow's love, charming Mistress Saunderson. Old ladies and gentlemen, repairing in capacious coaches to this representation, remind one another of the lumbering and crushing of carriages about the old playhouse in the Blackfriars, causing noisy tumults which drew indignant appeals from the Puritan housekeepers, whose privacy was sadly disturbed. But what was the tumult there to the scene on the south side of the "Fields," when "Hamlet," with Betterton, was offered to the public! The Jehus contend for place, with the eagerness of ancient Britons in a battle of chariots. And see, the mob about the pit-doors have just caught a bailiff attempting to arrest an honest playgoer. They fasten the official up in a tub, and roll the trembling wretch all "round the square." They finish by hurling him against a carriage, which sweeps from a neighbouring street, at full gallop. Down come the horses over the barrelled bailiff, with sounds of hideous ruin; and the young lady lying back in the coach is screaming like mad. This lady is the dishonest daughter of brave, honest, and luckless Viscount Grandison. As yet, she is only Mrs. Palmer; next year she will be Countess of Castlemaine, bye and bye, Duchess of Cleveland.

At length, the audience are all safely housed and eager. Indifferent enough, however, they are, during the opening scenes. The fine gentlemen laugh loudly and comb their periwigs in the "best rooms." The fops stand erect in the boxes, to show how folly looks in clean linen; and the orange nymphs, with their

costly entertainment of fruit from Seville, giggle and chatter, as they stand on the benches below, with old and young admirers, proud of being recognised in the boxes.

The whole court of Denmark is before them; but not till the words, "'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother," fall from the lips of Betterton, is the general ear charmed, or the general tongue arrested. Then, indeed, the vainest fops and pertest orange girls look round and listen too. The voice is so low, and sad, and sweet; the modulation so tender, the dignity so natural, the grace so consummate, the intelligence in the attitude and aspect so striking, that all yield themselves to the delicious enchantment. "It's beyond imagination," whispers Mr. Pepys to his neighbour, who only answers with a long and low drawn "*Hush!*" How grand the head, how lofty the brow, what eloquence and fire in the eyes, how firm the mouth, how manly the sum of all! How is the whole audience subdued almost to tears, at the mingled love and awe which he displays in presence of the spirit of his father! Betterton fulfilled all that Overbury laid down with regard to what best graced an actor. "Whatsoever is commendable to the grave orator, is most exquisitely perfect in him; for by a full and significant action of the body he charms our attention. Sit in a full theatre, and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, while the actor is the centre." This was especially the case with Betterton; and now, as Hamlet's first soliloquy closes, and the charmed but silent audience "feel music's pulse in all their arteries," Mr. Pepys exclaims in his ecstasy, "It's the best acted part ever done by man." And the audience think so, too; there is a hurricane of applause; after which the fine gentlemen renew their prattle with the fine ladies, and the orange girls beset the Sir Foplings, and Pepys is heard saying to a critic, "I only know that Mr. Betterton is the best actor in the world."

But here comes the gentle Ophelia. The audience took an interest in this lady and the royal Dane, for there was not one in the house who was ignorant of the love passages between them, or of the coming marriage by which they were to receive additional warrant. Mistress Saunderson was worthy of the homage here implied. There was mind in her acting; and she not only possessed personal beauty, but the richer beauty of a virtuous life. They were a well-matched couple on and off the stage; and their mutual affection was based on a mutual respect and esteem. People thought of them as inseparable, and young ladies wondered

how Mr. Betterton could play Mercutio, and leave Mistress Saunderson as Juliet, to be adored by the not ineffective Mr. Harris, as Romeo! The whole house, as long as the incomparable pair were on the stage, were in a dream of delight. Their grace, perfection, good looks, the love they had so cunningly simulated, and that which they were known to mutually entertain, formed the theme of all tongues.

Fifty years after these early triumphs, an aged couple resided in one of the best houses in Russell Street, Covent Garden,—the walls of which were covered with pictures, prints, and drawings, selected with taste and judgment. They were still a handsome pair. The venerable lady, indeed, looks pale and somewhat saddened. The gleam of April sunshine which penetrates the apartment cannot win her from the fire. She is Mrs. Betterton, and ever and anon she looks with a sort of proud sorrow on her aged husband. His fortune, nobly earned, has been diminished by "speculation," but the means whereby he achieved it are his still, and Thomas Betterton, in the latter years of Queen Anne, is the chief glory of the stage, even as he was in the first year of King Charles. The lofty column, however, is a little shaken. It is not a ruin, but is beautiful in its decay. Yet that it should decay at all is a source of so much tender anxiety to the actor's wife, that her senses suffer disturbance, and there may be seen in her features something of the distraught Ophelia of half a century ago.

It is the 13th of April, 1710—his last benefit night; and the tears are in the lady's eyes, and a painful sort of smile on her trembling lips, for Betterton kisses her as he goes forth that afternoon to take leave, as it proved, of the stage for ever. He is in such pain from gout that he can scarcely walk to his carriage, and how is he to enact the noble and fiery Melantius in that ill-named drama of horror, "The Maid's Tragedy?" Hoping for the best, the old player is conveyed to the theatre, built by Vanbrugh, in the Haymarket. Through the stage door he is carried in loving arms to his dressing room. At the end of an hour, Wilks is there, and Pinkethman, and Mrs. Barry, all dressed for their parts, and agreeably disappointed to find Melantius robed, armoured, and besworded, with one foot in a buskin and the other in a slipper. To enable him even to wear the latter, he had first thrust his inflamed foot into water; but stout as he seemed, trying his strength to and fro in the room, the hand of Death was at that moment descending on the grandest of English actors.

The house rose to receive him who had delighted themselves, their sires, and their grandsires. The audience were packed "like Norfolk biffins." The edifice itself was only five years old, and when it was a-building, people laughed at the folly which reared a new theatre in the country, instead of in London;—for in 1705 nearly all beyond the Haymarket was open field, straight away westward and northward. That such a house could ever be filled was set down as an impossibility; but the achievement was accomplished on this eventful benefit night; when the popular favourite was about to utter his last words, and to belong thenceforward only to the history of the stage he had adorned.

There was a shout which shook him, as Lysippus uttered the words, "Noble Melantius," which heralded his coming. Every word which could be applied to himself was marked by a storm of applause, and when Melantius said of Amintor—

> "His youth did promise much, and his ripe years
> Will see it all performed,"

a murmuring comment ran round the house, that this had been effected by Betterton himself. Again, when he bids Amintor "hear thy friend, who has more years than thou," there were probably few who did not wish that Betterton were as young as Wilks: but when he subsequently thundered forth the famous passage, "My heart will never fail me," there was a very tempest of excitement, which was carried to its utmost height, in thundering peal on peal of unbridled approbation, as the great Rhodian gazed full on the house, exclaiming—

> "My heart
> And limbs are still the same: my will as great
> To do you service!"

No one doubted more than a fractional part of this assertion, and Betterton, acting to the end under a continued fire of "*bravos!*" may have thrown more than the original meaning into the phrase—

> "That little word was worth all the sounds
> That ever I shall hear again!"

Few were the words he was destined ever to hear again; and the subsequent prophecy of his own certain and proximate death, on which the curtain slowly descended, was fulfilled very speedily after they were uttered. Wycherley, writing to Pope, April 27th,

says :—"Poor Mr. Betterton is going to make his exit from the stage of this world, the gout being gotten up into his head, and as the physicians say, will certainly carry him off suddenly." He died before Wycherley's ink was dry.

Such was the close of a career which had commenced fifty-one years before! The record of that career affords many a lesson and valuable suggestion to young actors, but I have to say a word previously of the Bettertons, before the brothers of that name, Thomas and the less known William, assumed the sock and buskin.

Tothill Street, Westminster, is not at present a fine or a fragrant locality. It has a crapulous look and a villainous smell, and petty traders now huddle together where nobles once were argely housed. Thomas Betterton was born here, about the year 1634-5. The street was then in its early decline, or Betterton's father, one of King Charles's cooks could hardly have had home in it. Nevertheless, there still clung to it a considerable share of dignity. That the street long continued to enjoy a certain dignity is apparent from the fact that, in 1664, when Betterton was rousing the town by his acting, as Bosola, in Webster's "Duchess of Malfy," Sir Henry Herbert (brother of the poet, George, and of Lord Herbert of Cherbury) established his office of Master of the Revels, in Tothill Street. It was not till the next century that the decline of this street set in. Southern, the dramatist, resided and died there, but it was in rooms over an oilman's shop; and Edmund Burke lived modestly at the east end, before those mysterious thousands were amassed by which he was enabled to establish himself as a country gentleman.

Galt, and the other biographers of Betterton, complain of the paucity of materials for the life of so great an actor. Therein is his life told; or rather Pepys tells it more correctly in an entry in his diary for October, 1662, in which he says—"Betterton is a very sober, serious man, and studious, and humble, following of his studies; and is rich already with what he gets and saves." *There* is the great and modest artist's whole life—earnestness, labour, lack of presumption, and the recompence. At the two ends of his career, two competent judges pronounced him to be the best actor they had ever seen. The two men were Pepys, who was born in the reign of Charles I., and Pope, who died in the reign of George II. This testimony refers to above a century, during which time the stage knew no such player as he. Pope, indeed, notices that old critics used to place Hart on an equality

with him; this is, probably, an error for Harris, who had a party at court among the gay people there who were oppressed by the majesty of Betterton. Pepys alludes to this partisanship in 1663. "This fellow" (Harris), he remarks, "grew very proud of late, the King and everybody else crying him up so high, and that above Betterton, he being a *more aery man*, as he is, indeed."

From the days of Betterton's bright youth to that of his old age, the sober seriousness of the "artist," for which Pepys vouches, never left him. With the dress he assumed, for the night, the nature of the man—be it "Hamlet" or "Thersites," "Valentine" or "Sir John Brute," of whom he was to be the representative. In the "green-room," as on the stage, he was, for the time being, subdued or raised to the quality of him whose likeness he had put on. In presence of the audience, he was never tempted by applause to forget his part, or himself. Once only, Pepys registers, with surprise, an incident which took place at the representation of "Mustapha," in 1667. It was "bravely acted," he says, "only both Betterton and Harris could not contain from laughing, in the midst of a most serious part, from the ridiculous mistake of one of the men upon the stage; which I did not like."

Then for his humility, I find the testimony of Pepys sufficiently corroborated. It may have been politic in Betterton, as a young man, to repair to Mr. Cowley's lodgings in town, and ask from that author his particular views with regard to the part of Colonel Jolly in the "Cutter of Coleman Street," which had been entrusted to the young actor; but the politic humility of 1661 was, in fact, the practised modesty of Betterton's life. In the very meridian of his fame, he and Mrs. Barry were as ready to take instruction respecting the characters of Jaffier and Belvidera, from poor battered Otway, as they subsequently were from that very fine gentleman, Mr. Congreve, when they were cast for the hero and heroine of his comedies. To Rowe's instructions, too, they listened with deference; and, "Sir John and Lady Brute" were not undertaken by them till they had conferred with the author, solid Vanbrugh. The mention of these last personages reminds me of a domestic circumstance of interest respecting Betterton. He and Mrs. Barry acted the principal characters in "The Provoked Wife;" the part of Lady Fancyful was played by Mrs. Bowman. This young lady was the adopted child of the Bettertons, and the daughter of a friend (Sir Frederick Watson, Bart.) to whom Betterton had entrusted the bulk of his little wealth as a commercial venture to the East Indies. A ruinous

failure ensued, but Betterton adopted the child of the wholly ruined man who had nearly ruined *him*. He gave her all he had to bestow, careful instruction in his art; and the lady became an actress of merit. This merit, added to considerable personal charms, won for her the homage of Bowman, a player, who became the father of the stage, though he never grew, confessedly, old. In after years, he would converse freely enough of his wife and her second father, Betterton; but if you asked the carefully-dressed Mr. Bowman anything with respect to his age, no other reply was to be had from him than—"Sir, it is very well!"

The earnestness of Betterton continued to the last. Severely disciplined, as he had been by Davenant, he subjected himself to the same discipline to the very close; and he was not pleased to see it disregarded, or relaxed, by younger actors whom late and gay "last nights" brought ill and incompetent to rehearsal. Those players might have reaped valuable instruction out of the harvest of old Thomas's experience and wisdom, had they been so minded. Not only was Betterton's range of characters unlimited, but the number he "created" was never equalled by any subsequent actor of eminence—namely, about one hundred and thirty! In some single seasons he studied and represented no less than eight original parts—an amount of labour which would shake the nerves of the stoutest among us now. Let me add, that great as Hart had been in Alexander, and often as the town had seen him in that stately creation of his, Betterton gave to the part a new charm, and for *three* successive days, (proof of a great *hit* in those times), crowded houses acknowledged the new hero.

His brief relaxation was spent on his little Berkshire farm, whence he once took a rustic to Bartholomew Fair for a holiday. The master of the puppet-show declined to take money for admission, "Mr. Betterton," he said, "is a brother actor!" Roger, the rustic, was slow to believe that the puppets were not alive; and so similar in vitality appeared to him, on the same night, at Drury Lane, the Jupiter and Alcmena in "Amphitryon," played by Betterton and Mrs. Barry, that on being asked what he thought of them, Roger, taking them for puppets, answered, "They did wonderfully well, for rags and sticks."

In the friendships cultivated by the great actor, and in the influences which he exerted over the most intellectual men who were his friends, we may discover proofs of Betterton's moral worth and mental power. Glorious Thomas not only associated with "Glorious John," but became his critic,—one to whom

Dryden listened with respect, and to whose suggestions he lent a ready acquiescence. Intimate as Betterton was with Dryden, he enjoyed a closer intimacy with Tillotson. The divine placed charity above rubrics, and discarded bigotry as he did perukes. He could extend a friendly hand to the benevolent Arian, Firmin; aad welcome, even after he entered the archiepiscopal palace at Lambeth, such a visitor as the great actor, Betterton. When Tillotson and Betterton met, the greatest preacher and the greatest player of the day were together. Tillotson was puzzled to account for the circumstance that his friend, the actor, exercised a vaster power over human sympathies and antipathies than *he* had hitherto done as a preacher. The reason was plain to Betterton. "You, in the pulpit," said he, "only tell a story: I, on the stage, show facts." Observe, too, what a prettier way this was of putting it than that adopted by Garrick when one of his clerical friends was similarly perplexed. "I account for it in this way," said the latter Roscius: "You deal with facts as if they were fictions; I deal with fictions as if they were facts." Colley Cibber tells us that "the most a Vandyke can arrive at is to make his Portraits of Great Persons seem to *think*. A Shakspeare goes farther yet, and tells you *what* his Pictures thought. A Betterton steps beyond 'em both, and calls them from the grave, to breathe and be themselves again in Feature, Speech, and Motion." That Tillotson profited by the comment of Betterton is to be believed, from the fact that he introduced into the pulpit the custom of preaching from notes. Thenceforth, he left off "telling his story," as from a book, and, having action at command, could the nearer approach to the "acting of facts."

Pope knew Betterton from his own boyhood till the actor died, in 1710, when the poet was twenty-two years of age. The latter listened eagerly to the old traditions which the player narrated of the earlier times. Betterton was warrant to him, on the authority of Davenant, from whom the actor had it, that there was no foundation for the old legend which told of an ungenerous rivalry between Shakspeare and Old Ben. The player was counsellor, rather than critic or censor, with young Pope. The latter, at the age of twelve years, had written the greater portion of an imitative epic poem, entitled *Alcander, Prince of Rhodes*. It was a poem which abounded in dashing exaggerations, and fair imitations of the styles of the then greater English poets. The player advised the bard to convert his poem into a play. The lad excused himself. He feared encountering either the law of the

drama or the taste of the town; and Betterton left him to his own unfettered way. The actor lived to see that the boy was the better judge of his own powers, for young Pope produced his *Essay on Criticism* the year before Betterton died. A few years later the poet rendered any possible fulfilment of the player's counsel impossible, by dropping the manuscript of *Alcander* into the flames. Pope remembered the player with affection. For some time after Betterton's decease, the print-shops abounded with mezzotinto engravings of his portrait by Kneller. Of this portrait the poet himself executed a copy, which still exists. It passed into the collection of his friend Murray, and is now in that of Murray's descendant, the Earl of Mansfield. Kneller's portrait of Betterton is enshrined among goodly company at princely Knowle—the patrimony of the Sackvilles. It is there, with that of his fellow-actor, Mohun; his friend, Dryden; and his great successor, Garrick;—the latter being the work of Reynolds.

This master of his art had the greatest esteem for a *silent* and *attentive* audience. It was easy, he used to say, for any player to rouse the house, but to subdue it, render it rapt and hushed to, at the most, a murmur, was work for an artist; and in such effects no one approached him. And yet the rage of Othello was more "in his line" than the tenderness of Castalio; but he touched the audience in his rage. "I have hardly a notion," says Addison, "that any performer of antiquity could surpass the action of Mr. Betterton, in any of the occasions in which he has appeared on our stage. The wonderful agony which he appeared in when he examined the circumstance of the handkerchief in the part of Othello, the mixture of love that intruded in his mind, upon the innocent answers Desdemona makes, betrayed, in his gesture, such a variety and vicissitude of passions, as would admonish a man to be afraid of his own heart, and perfectly convince him that it is to stab it, to admit that worst of daggers, jealousy." The dignity and earnestness of Betterton were so notorious and so attractive, that people flocked only to hear him speak a prologue, while brother actors looked on, admired, and despaired. Age, trials, infirmity never damped his ardour. Even angry and unsuccessful authors, who railed against the players who had brought their dramas to grief, made exception of Betterton. He was always ready, always perfect, always anxious to effect the utmost within his power. Among the foremost of his merits may be noticed his freedom from all jealousy, and his willingness to assist others up the height which he had himself

surmounted. That he played Bassanio to Doggett's Shylock is, perhaps, not saying much by way of illustration; but that he acted Horatio to Powell's Lothario; that he gave up Jupiter ("Amphitryon") and Valentine, two of his original parts, to Wilks, and even yielded Othello, one of the most elaborate and exquisite of his "presentments" to Thurmond, *are* fair instances in point. When Bowman introduced young Barton Booth to "old Thomas," the latter welcomed him heartily, and after seeing his Maximus, in "Valentinian," recognised in him his successor. Booth never named Betterton but with affectionate reverence. But neither he nor any other actor, for a whole generation, was of worth enough to supply Betterton's place. At seventy he was without his equal, and yet was then something less than he had been in preceding years. "So far was he," says Cibber, "from being ever overtaken, that for many years after his decease, I seldom saw any of his parts in Shakspeare supplied, by others, but it drew from me the lamentations of Ophelia upon Hamlet's being unlike what she had seen him—

"Ah! woe is me!
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!"

When Colley Cibber first appeared before a London audience he was a "volunteer" who went in for practice; and he had the misfortune, on one occasion, to put the great master out, by some error on his own part. Betterton subsequently inquired the young man's name, and the amount of his salary; and hearing that the former was Cibber, and that, as yet, he received nothing, "Put him down ten shillings a-week," said Betterton, "and forfeit him five" Colley was delighted It was placing his foot on the first round of the ladder; and his respect for "Mr. Betterton" was unbounded. Indeed there were few who did not pay him some homage. The King himself delighted to honour him. Charles, James, Queen Mary, and Queen Anne, sent him assurances of their admiration; King William admitted him to a private audience, and when the patentees of Drury Lane were, through lack of general patronage, suggesting the expediency of a reduction of salaries, great Nassau placed in the hands of Betterton the licence which freed him from the thraldom of the Drury tyrants, and authorised him to open the second theatre erected in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Next to his most sacred Majesty, the most formidable personage in the kingdom, in the eyes

of the actors, was the Lord Chamberlain, who was master of the very lives of the performers, having the absolute control of the stage whereby they lived. This potentate, however, seemed ever to favour Betterton. When unstable yet useful Powell suddenly abandoned Drury Lane, to join the company in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Chamberlain did not deign to notice the offence; but when, all as suddenly, the capricious and unreliable Powell abandoned the house in the Fields, and betook himself again to that in the Lane—the angry Lord Chamberlain sent a "messenger" after him to his lodgings, and clapped the unoffending Thespian, for a couple of days, in the Gate House.

Betterton produced the "Fair Penitent," by Rowe, Mrs. Barry being the Calista. When the dead body of Lothario was lying decently covered on the stage, Powell's dresser, Warren, lay there for his master, who, requiring the services of the man in his dressing room, and not remembering where he was, called aloud for him so repeatedly, and at length so angrily, that Warren leaped up in a fright, and ran from the stage. His cloak, however, had got hooked to the bier, and this he dragged after him, sweeping down, as he dashed off in his confusion, table, lamps, books, bones, and upsetting the astounded Calista herself. Irrepressible laughter convulsed the audience, but Betterton's reverence for the dignity of tragedy was shocked, and he stopped the piece in its full career of success, until the town had ceased to think of Warren's escapade.

I know of but one man who has spoken of Betterton disparagingly—Anthony Aston. But even that cynic is constrained so to modify his censure, as to convert it into praise. When Betterton was approaching threescore years and ten, Anthony could have wished that he "would have resigned the part of Hamlet to some young actor who might have *personated*, though," mark the distinction, "*not have acted it better*." Aston's grounds for his wish are so many justifications of Betterton; "for," says Anthony, "when he threw himself at Ophelia's feet, he appeared a little too grave for a young student just from the University of Wittenberg." "His repartees," Anthony thinks, "were more those of a philosopher than the sporting flashes of young Hamlet;" as if Hamlet were not the gravest of students, and the most philosophical of young Danes! Aston caricatures the aged actor only again to commend him. He depreciates the figure which time had touched, magnifies the defects, registers the lack of power, and the slow sameness of action; hints at a little re-

mains of paralysis, and at gout in the legs, profanely utters the words "fat" and "clumsy," and suggests that the face is "slightly pock-marked." But we are therewith told that his air was serious, venerable, and majestic; and that though his voice was "low and grumbling, he could turn it by an artful climax which enforced an universal attention even from the fops and orange-girls." Cibber declares that there was such enchantment in his voice alone, the multitude no more cared for sense in the words he spoke, "than our musical connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrated airs of an Italian Opera." Again, he says, "Could *how* Betterton spoke be as easily known as *what* he spoke, then might you see the Muse of Shakspeare in her triumph." "I never," adds honest Colley, "heard a line in tragedy come from *Betterton*, wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully satisfied, which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any one actor whatsoever." This was written in 1740, the year before little David took up the rich inheritance of "old Thomas." The next great pleasure to seeing Betterton's Hamlet is to read Cibber's masterly analysis of it. Cibber, describing the first scene between Hamlet and the spirit of his sire, notices that the passion in the speech of the son never rises beyond an almost breathless astonishment, or an impatience limited by filial reverence, to inquire into the suspected wrongs that may have raised him from the peaceful tomb! and a desire to know what a spirit so seemingly distrest might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son "to execute toward his future quiet in the grave. This was the light," he adds, "into which Betterton threw his scene, which he opened with a pause of mute amazement, then rising slowly to a solemn trembling voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself! and in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency, manly, but not braving, his voice never rising into that seeming outrage, or wild defiance, of what he naturally revered." A couple of lines reveal to us the leading principle of his Brutus. "When the Betterton-Brutus," says Colley, "was provoked in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye; his steady look alone supplied that terror which he disdained an intemperance in his voice should rise to." In his least effective characters, he, with an exception already noted, excelled all other actors; but in characters such as Hamlet and Othello he excelled himself.

The highest salary awarded to this great master of his art was

£5 per week, which included £1 by way of pension to his wife, after her retirement in 1694. In consideration of his merits, he was allowed to take a benefit in the season of 1708-9, when the actor had an ovation. In money for admission he received, indeed, only £76; but in complimentary guineas, he took home with him to Russell Street £450 more. The terms in which the *Tatler* spoke of him living,—the tender and affectionate, manly and heart-stirring passages in which the same writer bewailed him when dead,—are eloquent and enduring testimonies of the greatness of an actor, who was the glory of our stage, and of the worth of a man whose loss cost his sorrowing widow her reason. "*Decus et Dolor*." "The grace and the grief of the theatre." It is well applied to him who laboured incessantly, lived irreproachably, and died in harness, universally esteemed and regretted. He was the jewel of the English stage; and I never think of him, and of some to whom his example was given in vain, without saying with Overbury, "I value a worthy actor by the corruption of some few of the quality, as I would do gold in the ore; I should not mind the dross, but the purity of the metal." Betterton's dignity, his marvellous talent, his versatility, his imperishable fame, are all well known and acknowledged. His industry is indicated by the hundred and thirty new characters which he created! Among them were Jaffier and Valentine, three Virginiuses, and Sir John Brute. He was as mirthful in Falstaff as he was majestic in Alexander; and the craft of his Ulysses, the grace and passion of his Hamlet, the terrible force of his Othello, were not more remarkable than the low comedy of his Old Bachelor, the airyness of his Woodville, or the cowardly bluster of his Thersites. Betterton was not a greater actor than he was a true and honourable gentleman. As long as he lived, he gave dignity to his profession. The humble lad, born in Tothill Street, before monarchy and the stage went down, had a royal funeral in Westminster Abbey, after dying in harness almost in sight of the lamps. He deserved no less, for he was the king of an art which had well-nigh perished in the Commonwealth times, and he was a monarch who probably has never since had, altogether, his equal. Off, as on the stage, he was exemplary in his bearing; true to every duty; as good a country-gentleman on his farm in Berkshire as he was perfect actor in town; pursuing with his excellent wife the even tenor of his way; not tempted by the vices of his time, nor disturbed by its politics; not tippling like Underhill; not plotting and betraying the plotters against William, like Goodman, nor carrying letters

for a costly fee between London and St. Germains, like Scudamore. "Over him," writes Pope to H. Cromwell, May 17, 1710, "I would have this sentence of Tully for an epitaph, which will serve him as well in his moral as in his theatrical capacity: "*Vitæ bene actæ jucundissima est recordatio*." To the most pleasant memory of him, appropriate honour was paid in the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. On the ceiling of that house was painted a noble group of poets, chief among them were Shakspeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher. They were on a terrace, and a little below them stood Betterton, with whom they held conference. The subject illustrated the sentiment of Overbury, who says, "The actor adds grace to the poet's labours, for what in the poet is but ditty, in him is both ditty and music."

CHAPTER V.

"EXEUNT" AND "ENTER."

AFTER Betterton, there was not, in the Duke's company, a more accomplished actor than Harris. He had some knowledge of art, danced gracefully, and had a charming voice, with a love for displaying it. His portrait was taken by Mr. Hailes;—"in his habit of Henry V., mighty like a player;" and as Cardinal Wolsey; which portrait is in the Pepysian Library at Cambridge. Pepys says, "I do not know another person better qualified for converse, whether in things of his own trade, or of other kind; a man of great understanding and observation. . . . I was mighty pleased with his company," a company with which were united, now Killigrew and the rakes, and anon, Cooper the artist, and "Cooper's cosen Jacke," and "Mr Butler, that wrote Hudibras," being, says Mr. Pepys, "all eminent men, in their way." Harris, at the great coffee-house in Covent Garden, listened to, or talked with, Dryden, and held his own against the best wits of the town. I am afraid Harris loved the liquor which a bishop praised. In a letter from Nell Gwyn to Mr. Hyde, in 1678, she says, "My lord of Dorset apiers" (at court) "wunse in thre munths, for he drinkes aile with Shadwell and Mr. Harris, at the Duke's house all day long."

A graceful actor of the troop, Scudamore, played amorous young knights, sparkling young gentlemen, scampish French and English beaux, gay and good-looking kings, and roystering kings' sons; such as Harry, Prince of Wales. Off the stage, he enacted another part. When King James was in exile, Scudamore was engaged as a Jacobite agent, and he carried many a message between London and St. Germains. But our Ambassador, the Earl of Manchester, had his eye upon him. One of the Earl's despatches concludes with the words:—"One Scudamore, a

player in Lincoln's Inn Fields, has been here, and was with the late King, and often at St. Germains. He is now, I believe, at London. Several such sort of fellows go and come very often; but I cannot see how it is to be prevented, for without a positive oath nothing can be done to them." The date of this despatch is August, 1700, at which time the player ought to have been engaged in a less perilous character, for an entry in Luttrell's Diary, 28th May, 1700, records that "Mr. Scudamore of the play-house is married to a young lady of £4,000 fortune, who fell in love with him."

Cave Underhill, another member of Davenant's company, was, in 1668, the truest low comedian of his troop. He was a tall, fat, broad-faced, flat-nosed, wide-mouthed, thick-lipped, rough-voiced, awkwardly-active low comedian. Modest, he never understood his own popularity, and the house was convulsed with his solemn Don Quixote and his stupid Lolpoop, without Cave being able to account for it. For his benefit on the 3rd of June, 1709, the patronage of the public was bespoken by Mr. Bickerstaffe, in the Tatler. On this occasion Underhill played his old part of the Gravedigger, and in 1710 he died a pensioner of the theatre whose proprietors he had helped to enrich.

The two theatres continued in opposition until the two companies were formed into one, in the year 1682. Meanwhile, fire destroyed the old edifice of the King's company, in Drury Lane, in January, 1672, and till Wren's new theatre was ready for them in 1674, the unhoused troop played at Dorset Gardens, or at Lincoln's Inn Fields. On the occasion of opening the new house, the prices of admission were raised; to the boxes, from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.*; pit, from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.*; the first gallery, from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*; and the upper gallery, from 6*d.* to 1*s.*

Down to the year 1682, the King's company lost several old and able actors, and acquired only Powell, Griffin, and Beeston. George Powell was the son of an obscure actor. His brilliancy was marred by his devotion to jollity. The *Tatler* calls him the "haughty George Powell," when referring to his appearance in Falstaff for his benefit, in April, 1712. "The haughty George Powell hopes all the goodnatured part of the town will favour him whom they applauded in Alexander, Timon, Lear, and Orestes, with their company this night, when he hazards all his heroic glory in the humbler condition of honest Jack Falstaff." During his career, from 1687 to 1714, he originated about forty parts; in such as the gallant, gay Lothario, he has rarely been equalled.

On the first night of the "Relapse," in which he played Worthy, he was so fired by his libations, that Mrs. Rogers, as Amanda, was frightened out of her wits by his tempestuous love-making. Powell's literary contributions to the drama were chiefly plagiarisms awkwardly appropriated.

In 1672 Lee and Otway tempted fortune on the stage of the Duke's company; Lee, in parts such as Duncan, in "Macbeth." Otway as the King, in Mrs. Behn's "Forced Marriage." They both failed. Lee lost his voice through nervousness. Otway, audacious enough at the coffee-houses, lost his confidence. There were other actors whose success was well deserved. Little Bowman has already been noticed. Cademan had learnt the mystery of the book-trade before he appeared as a player. He was driven from the latter vocation through an accident. Engaged in a fencing-scene with Harris, he was severely wounded by his adversary's foil, in the hand and eye, and he lost power not only of action but of speech. For nearly forty years the company assigned him a modest pension. His comrade, Jevon, an ex-dancing master, was the original Jobson in his own little comedy, "A Devil of a Wife," which has been altered into "The Devil to Pay." He made Settle half mad and the house ecstatic, when having, as Lycurgus, Prince of China, to "*fall on his sword*," he placed it flat on the stage, and falling over it, "*died*," according to the direction of the acting copy. The dust of this jester lies in Hampstead churchyard. Longer known was Anthony Leigh. His master-piece was Dryden's Spanish Friar, Dominique. How he *looked* in that part, may be seen by a portrait, painted in words, by Cibber. "In the canting, grave hypocrisy, of the Spanish Friar, Leigh stretched the veil of piety so thinly over him, that in every look, word, and motion, you saw a palpable, wicked slyness shine throughout it. Here he kept his vivacity demurely confined, till the pretended duty of his function demanded it; and then he exerted it with a choleric, sacerdotal insolence." Less happy than Leigh was poor Matthew Medbourne, an actor of merit, and a man of some learning, whose career was cut short by a zeal for his religion, which led him into a participation in the "Popish Plot." The testimony of Titus Oates caused his arrest, on the 26th of November, 1678, and his death;—for poor Medbourne died of the Newgate rigour in the following March. He is memorable, as being the first who introduced Molière's "Tartuffe" on the English stage, in a close translation, which was acted in 1670, with remarkable success. Cibber's "Nonjuror"

(1717), and Bickerstaffe's "Hypocrite" (1768), were only adaptations—the first of "Tartuffe" and the second of the "Nonjuror." Mr. Oxenford, however, reproduced the original in a more perfect form than Medbourne, in a translation in verse, which was brought out at the Haymarket in 1851, with a success honestly earned by all, especially by Mr. Webster, who played the principal character. Sandford and Smith were actors, whose names constantly recur together. The tall, handsome, manly Smith, frequently played Banquo; when his ghost was represented by the short, spare, drolly undignified Sandford! The latter was famous for his villains; by a look he could win the attention of an audience "to whatever he judged worth more than their ordinary notice;" and by attending to the punctuation of a passage, he divested it of the jingle of rhyme, or the measured monotony of blank verse. Cibber believes that Shakspeare would have chosen him to represent Richard, had poet and player been contemporaneous. Smith's strong Toryism made him unacceptable to the Whig audiences of the reign of William. He originally represented Sir Fopling Flutter and Pierre, Chamont and Scandal. "Mr. Smith," says Cibber, with fine satire, "whose character as a gentleman could have been no way impeached, had he not degraded it by being a celebrated actor, had the misfortune, in a dispute with a gentleman behind the scenes, to receive a blow from him. The same night an account of this action was carried to the King, to whom the gentleman was represented so grossly in the wrong, that the next day his Majesty sent to forbid him the court upon it. This indignity, cast upon a gentleman only for maltreating a player, was looked upon as the concern of every gentleman! and a party was soon formed to assert and vindicate their honour, by humbling this favoured actor, whose slight injury had been judged equal to so severe a notice. Accordingly, the next time Smith acted, he was received with a chorus of cat-calls, that soon convinced him he should not be suffered to proceed in his part; upon which, without the least discomposure, he ordered the curtain to be dropped, and having a competent fortune of his own, thought the conditions of adding to it, by remaining on the stage, were too dear, and from that day entirely quitted it." He returned, however, after a while, but died in 1696, of fatigue, in studying and acting Cyaxares, in "Cyrus the Great."

Let us now pass to the "famous" actress of the Duke's company, the incomparable Elizabeth Barry.

CHAPTER VI.

ELIZABETH BARRY.

The seventeenth century gave many ladies to the stage, and Elizabeth Barry was the most famous of them. She was the daughter of a barrister, who raised a regiment for the King, and thereby was himself raised to the rank of colonel. The effort did not help his Majesty, and it ruined the Colonel, whose daughter was born in the year 1658.

Davenant took the fatherless girl into his house, and trained her for the stage, while the flash of her light eyes beneath her dark hair and brows was as yet mere girlish spirit; it was not intelligence. *That* was given her by Rochester. Davenant was in despair at her dulness; but he acknowledged the dignity of her manners. At three separate periods managers rejected her. "She will never be an actress!" they exclaimed. Rochester protested that he would make her one in six months.

The wicked young Earl, who lived in Lincoln's Inn Fields, near the theatre, became her master, and she, of course, his mistress, or "pupil." The pains he bestowed upon this young mistress were infinite. Sentence by sentence, he made her understand her author; and the intelligence of the girl leaped into life and splendour under such instruction. To familiarise her with the stage, he superintended thirty rehearsals of each character in which she was to appear. Of these rehearsals, twelve were in full costume; and when she was about to enact Isabella, the Hungarian Queen, in "Mustapha," the page who bore her train was tutored so to move as to aid in the display of grace and majesty which was to charm the town.

For some time, the town refused to recognise any magic in the charmer: and managers despaired of the success of a young actress who could not decently thread the mazes of a country

dance. Hamilton owned her beauty, but denied her talent. Nevertheless, she one night burst forth in all her grandeur, and Mustapha and Zanger were not more ardently in love with the brilliant queen than the audience were. At the head of the latter were Charles II. and the Duke and Duchess of York. Rochester had asked for their presence, and they came to add to the triumph of Colonel Barry's daughter. Crabbed old Antony Aston, the actor and prompter, spoke disparagingly of the young lady. According to him, she was no colonel's daughter, but "woman to Lady Shelton, my godmother." The two conditions were not incompatible. It was no unusual thing to find a lady in straitened circumstances fulfilling the office of "woman," or "maid," to the wives of peers and baronets. Successful as Elizabeth Barry was in parts which she had studied under Lord Rochester, she cannot be said to have established herself as the greatest actress of her time till the year 1680. Up to this period she appeared in few characters suited to her abilities. In tragedies, she enacted the confidants to the great theatrical queens, Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Betterton; in comedies, the rattling, reckless, and audacious women, at whose sallies the pit roared approbation, and the box ladies were not much startled. But, in the year just named, Otway produced his tragedy of "The Orphan, or the Unhappy Marriage," in which Mrs. Barry was the Monimia to the Castalio of Betterton. On the same night, the part of the Page was charmingly played by a future great actress, Mrs. Bracegirdle, then not six years old. In Monimia, Mrs. Barry exercised some of those attributes which she possessed above all actresses Cibber had ever seen, and which those who had not seen her were unable to conceive. "In characters of greatness," says Cibber, in his *Apology*, "she had a presence of elevated dignity; her mien and motion superb and gracefully majestic; her voice full, clear, and strong, so that no violence of passion could be too much for her: and when distress or tenderness possessed her, she subsided into the most affecting melody and softness."

From the position which she took by acting Monimia, Mrs. Barry was never shaken by any rival, however eminent. Her industry was indefatigable as that of Betterton. During the thirty-seven years she was on the stage, beginning at Dorset Gardens, in 1673, and ending at the Haymarket, in 1710, she originated one hundred and twelve characters! Monimia was the nineteenth of the characters of which she was the original representative; the first of those which mark the "stations" of

her glory. In 1682, she added another leaf to the chaplet of her own and Otway's renown, by her performance of Belvidera. In the softer passions of this part she manifested herself the "mistress of tears," and night after night the town flocked to weep at her bidding, and to enjoy the luxury of woe. The triumph endured for years. Her Monimia and Belvidera were not even put aside by her Cassandra, in the "Cleomenes" of Dryden, first acted at the Theatre Royal, in 1692. "Mrs. Barry," says the author, "always excellent, has, in this tragedy, excelled herself, and gained a reputation beyond any woman whom I have ever seen on the theatre." The praise is not unduly applied; for Mrs Barry could give expression to the rant of Dryden, and even to that of Lee, without ever verging towards bombast. "In scenes of anger, defiance, or resentment," writes Cibber, "while she was impetuous and terrible, she poured out the sentiment with an enchanting harmony." Antony Aston describes her in tragedy as "solemn and august;" and she, perhaps, was never more so than in Isabella, the heorine of the tragic drama rather than tragedy, by Southerne,—"The Fatal Marriage." Aston remarks, that "her face ever expressed the passions; it somewhat preceded her action, as her action did her words. Her versatility was marvellous, and it is not ill illustrated by the fact that in the same season she created two such opposite characters as Lady Brute, in Vanbrugh's "Provoked Wife," and Zara, in Congreve's "Mourning Bride." The last of her great tragic triumphs, in a part of which she was the original representative, occurred in 1703, when, in her forty-fifth year, she played Calista, in "The Fair Penitent," that wholesale felony of Rowe from Massinger! Though the piece did not answer the expectations of the public, Mrs. Barry did not fall short of them, in the heroine; and she, perhaps, surpassed expectation, when, in 1705, she elicited the admiration of the town by her creation of the sparkling character of Clarissa, in "The Confederacy." By this time she was growing rich in wealth as well as in glory. In former days, when the play was over, the attendant boy used to call for "Mrs. Barry's clogs!" or "Mrs. Bracegirdle's pattens!" but *now*, "Mrs. Barry's chair" was as familiar a sound as "Mrs. Oldfield's." If she was not invariably wise in the stewardship of her money, some portions were expended in a judicious manner, creditable to her taste. At the sale of Betterton's effects, she purchased the picture of Shakspeare which Betterton bought from Davenant, who had purchased it from some of the players after

the theatres had been closed by authority. Subsequently, Mrs. Barry sold this relic for forty guineas, to a Mr. Keck, whose daughter carried it with her as part of her dowry, when she married Mr. Nicoll, of Colney Hatch. *Their* daughter and heiress, in her turn, took the portrait, and a large fortune with her, to her husband, the third Duke of Chandos; and, finally, Mrs. Barry's effigy of Shakspeare passed with another bride into another house, Lady Anne Brydges, the daughter of the Duke and Duchess, carrying it with her to Stowe on her marriage with the Marquis of Buckingham, subsequently Duke of Buckingham and Chandos.

Mrs. Barry, like many other eminent members of her profession, was famous for the way in which she uttered some single expression in the play. The "Look there!" of Spranger Barry, as he passed the body of Rutland, always moved the house to tears. So, the "Remember twelve!" of Mrs. Siddons' Belvidera; the "Well, as you guess!" of Edmund Kean's Richard; the "Qu'en dis tu?" of Talma's Manlius; the "Je crois!" of Rachel's Pauline; the "Je vois!" of Mademoiselle Mars's Valerie, were "points" which never failed to excite an audience to enthusiasm. But there were two phrases with which Mrs. Barry could still more deeply move an audience. When, in "The Orphan," she pronounced the words, "Ah, poor Castalio!" not only did the audience weep, but the actress herself shed tears, abundantly. The other phrase was in a scene of Banks's puling tragedy, "The Unhappy Favourite, or the Earl of Essex." In that play, Mrs. Barry represented Queen Elizabeth, and *that* with such effect that it was currently said, the people of her day knew more of Queen Elizabeth from her impersonation of the character than they did from history. The apparently common-place remark, in answer to Burleigh's announcement of a Bill for raising £200,000 for the payment of the army, "What mean my giving subjects? It shall pass!" was invested by her with such emphatic grace and dignity, as to call up murmurs of approbation which swelled into thunders of applause. Mary of Modena testified her admiration by bestowing on the mimic queen the wedding-dress Mary herself had worn when she was united to James II., and the mantle borne by her at her coronation. Thus attired, the queen of the hour represented the Elizabeth, with which enthusiastic crowds became so much more familiar than they were with the Elizabeth of history. But this "solemn and august" tragedian could also command laughter, and make a whole house joyous by the exercise of another branch of her vocation. "In free comedy,"

says Aston, "she was alert, easy, and genteel, pleasant in her face and action, filling the stage with variety of gesture. So entirely did she surrender herself to the influences of the characters she represented, that in stage dialogues she often turned pale or flushed red, as varying passions prompted."

With the audience she was never for a moment out of favour, after she had made her merit apparent Nevertheless, on and behind the stage Mrs. Barry's supremacy was sometimes questioned, and her commands disobeyed. When she was about to play Roxana to the Statira of Mrs. Boutell, in Lee's "Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great," she selected from the wardrobe a certain veil which was claimed by Mrs Boutell, as of right belonging to her. The property-man thought so too, and handed the veil to the last-named lady. His award was reasonable, for she was the original Statira, having played the part to the matchless Alexander of Hart, and to the glowing Roxana of the fascinating Marshall. I fear, however, that the lady was not moderate in her victory, and that by flaunting the trophy too frequently before the eyes of the rival queen, the daughter of Darius exasperated too fiercely her Persian rival in the heart of Alexander. The rage and dissension set down for them in the play were, at all events, not simulated. The quarrel went on increasing in intensity from the first, and culminated in the gardens of Semiramis. When Roxana seized on her detested enemy there, and the supreme struggle took place, Mrs. Barry, with the exclamation of "Die, sorceress, die! and all my wrongs die with thee!" sent her polished dagger right through the stiff armour of Mrs. Boutell's stays. The consequences were a scratch and a shriek, but there was no great harm done. An investigation followed, and some mention was made of a real jealousy existing in Mrs. Barry's breast in reference to an admirer of lower rank than Alexander, lured from her feet by the little, flute-voiced Boutell. The deed itself was, however, mildly construed, and Mrs Barry was believed when she declared that she had been carried away by the illusion and excitement of the scene. We shall see this same scene repeated, with similar stage effects, by Mrs. Woffington and Mrs. Bellamy.

If there were a lover to add bitterness to the quarrel engendered by the veil, Mrs. Barry might have well spared one of whom she possessed so many. Without being positively a transcendant beauty, her attractions were confessed by many an Antony from the country, who thought their world of acres well lost for the

sake of a little sunshine from the eyes of this vanquishing, imperious, banquetting, heart and purse destroying Cleopatra. There were two classes of men who made epigrams, or caused others to make them against her, namely, the adorers on whom she ceased to smile, and those on whom she refused to smile at all. The coffee-house poetry which these perpetrated against her is the reverse of pleasant to read; but, under the protection of such a wit as Etherege, or such a fine gentleman as Rochester, Mrs. Barry cared little for her puny assailants.

Tom Brown taxed her with mercenary feelings; but against that and the humour of writers who affected intimate acquaintance with her affairs of the heart and purse, and as intimate a knowledge of the amount which Sir George Etherege and Lord Rochester bequeathed to their respective daughters, of whom Mistress Barry was the mother, she was armed. Neither of these children survived the "famous actress." She herself hardly survived Betterton,—at least on the stage. The day after the great tragedian's final appearance, Mrs. Barry trod the stage for the last time. The place was the old Haymarket, the play the "Spanish Friar," in which she enacted the Queen. And I can picture to myself the effect of the famous passage, when the Queen impetuously betrays her overwhelming love. "Haste, my Teresa, haste; and call him back!" "Prince Bertram?" asks the confidant; and then came the full burst, breaking through all restraint, and revealing a woman who seemed bathed in love. "*Torrismond!* There is no other HE!"

Mrs. Barry took no formal leave of the stage, but quietly withdrew from St. Mary-le-Savoy, in the Strand, to the pleasant village of Acton. Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs Knight, and Mrs. Bradshaw, succeeded to her theatrical dominion, by partition of her characters. Her professional salary had not been large, but her "benefits" were very productive; they who admired the actress or who loved the woman, alike pouring out gold and jewels in her lap. It was especially for her that performers' benefits were first devised. Authors alone had hitherto profited by such occasions, but, in recognition of her merit, King James commanded one to be given in her behalf, and what was commenced as a compliment soon passed into a custom.

In a little more than three years from the date when the curtain fell before her for the last time, Elizabeth Barry died. Brief resting season after such years of toil; but, perhaps, sufficient for better ends—after a career, too, of unbridled pleasure! "This

great actress," says Cibber, "dy'd of a fever, towards the latter years of Queen Anne; the year I have forgot, but perhaps you will recollect it, by an expression that fell from her in blank verse, in her last hours, when she was delirious, viz.,

'Ha! ha! and so they make us lords, by dozens!' "

This, however, does not settle the year so easily as Colley thought. In December, 1711, Queen Anne, by an unprecedented act, created twelve new peers, to enable the measures of her Tory ministers to be carried in the Upper House. Mrs. Barry died two years later, on the 7th of November, 1713, and the utterance of the words quoted above only indicates that her wandering memory was then dealing with incidents full two years old.

They who would see how Mrs. Barry looked living, have only to consult Kneller's grand picture, in which she is represented with her fine hair drawn back from her forehead, the face full, fair, and rippling with intellect. The eyes are inexpressibly beautiful. Of all her living beauty, living frailty, and living intelligence, there remains but this presentment. Her able, though less illustrious colleagues, are noticed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

"THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE ON THIS STAGE"

On the 16th November, 1682, the United Company opened their season at Drury Lane. Betterton and Mrs. Barry were at the head of this company, to which there came some accessions of note: among others Mrs. Percival (better known as Mrs. Mountfort, and as Mrs. Verbruggen), and Mrs. Bracegirdle. Of the new actors, the chief of these was Colley Cibber, who, in 1691, began by playing Sir Gentle's Servant in Southerne's "Sir Anthony Love;" and Bowen began with coachmen, and Pinkethman commenced with a tailor's part, six lines in length, in Shadwell's "Volunteers" Among the other new actors were Mountfort, Norris, and Doggett, with Verbruggen (or Alexander, as he sometimes called himself, from the character which he loved to play): Carlisle, and Peer.

Mrs. Mountfort's portrait has been so exquisitely limned by Colley Cibber, that we see her as she lived, and moved, and spoke. "Mrs. Mountfort was mistress of more variety of humour than I ever knew in any one actress. Nothing, though ever so barren, if within the bounds of nature, could be flat in her hands. She gave many heightening touches to characters but coldly written, and often made an author vain of his work, that, in itself, had but little merit. She was so fond of humour, in what low part soever to be found, that she would make no scruple of defacing her fair form to come heartily into it. In a play of Durfey's, now forgotten, called 'The Western Lass,' which part she acted, she transformed her whole being,—body, shape, voice, language, look and features,—into almost another animal, with a strong Devonshire dialect, a broad laughing voice, a poking head, round shoulders, an unconceiving eye, and the most bedizening, dowdy, dress that ever covered the untrained limbs of a Joan Trot. Nor

was her humour limited to her sex, for while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit, pretty fellow than is usually seen upon the stage. But what found most employment for her whole various excellence at once was the part of Melantha, in 'Mariage à la Mode.' Melantha is as finished an impertinent as ever fluttered in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most complete system of female foppery, that could possibly be crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady. Her language, dress, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry to be something more than is necessary or commendable. The first ridiculous airs that break from her are upon a gallant, never seen before, who delivers her a letter from her father, recommending him to her good graces, as an honourable lover Here, now, one would think that she might naturally show a little of the sex's decent reserve, though never so slightly covered. No, sir! not a tittle of it! Modesty is the virtue of a poor-souled country gentlewoman. She is too much a court-lady to be under so vulgar a confusion. She reads the letter, therefore, with a careless, dropping lip, and an erected brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands, by making a complete conquest of him at once; and that the letter might not embarrass her attack, crack! she crumbles it at once into her palm, and pours upon him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and motion. Down goes her dainty, diving, body to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit that she will not give her lover leave to praise it. Silent assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which at last he is relieved from, by her engagement to half a score visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling." Mrs. Mountfort died in 1703.

Mrs. Bracegirdle was on the stage from 1680 to 1707, and lived in retirement till 1748. Mrs. Barry saw her early promise, and encouraged her in her first essays. Mr. and Mrs. Betterton brought her up in their own house, and trained her to the stage. In her peculiar line she was supreme, till the younger and irresistible talent of Mrs. Oldfield brought about her resignation. She was exposed to sarcasm only on account of her excellent private character. Platonic friendships she *did* cultivate; Gildon

disbelieved the innocency of such friendships, and Tom Brown only gave her credit for a discreet decorum. Cibber, more generous, declares that her virtuous discretion rendered her the delight of the town; that whole audiences were in love with her, because of her youth, her cheerful gaiety, her musical voice, and her happy graces of manner. Her form was perfect Cibber says, "she had no greater claims to beauty than what the most desirable brunette might pretend to." Other contemporaries notice her dark brown hair and eyebrows, her dark, sparkling eyes, the face from which the blush of emotion spread in a flood of rosy beauty over her neck, and the intelligence and expression which are superior to mere beauty. She so enthralled her audience that, it is quaintly said, she never made an *exit* without the audience feeling as if they had moulded their faces into an imitation of her's. Then, she was as good, practically, as she was beautiful.

Aston says, "she used to go into Clare Market and give money to the poor unemployed basket-women, insomuch that she could not pass that neighbourhood without the thankful acclamation of people of all degrees." The parsimonious Congreve left £10,000 to the mad Duchess of Marlborough, who spent £7000 of it on a necklace. He would have done better, said Young, if he had left it to Mrs. Bracegirdle, and best, if he had bequeathed it to his poor relations.

Her performance of Statira was considered a justification of the frantic love of such an Alexander as Lee's; and "when she acted Millamant, all the faults, follies, and affectation of that agreeable tyrant, were venially melted down into so many charms and attractions of a conscious beauty" Young gentlemen of the town pronounced themselves in tender but unrequited love with her. Jack, Lord Lovelace, sought a return for his ardent homage, and obtained not what he sought. Authors wrote characters for her, and poured out their own passion through the medium of her adorers in the comedy. For her, Congreve composed his Araminta and his Cynthia, his Angelica, his Almeria, and Millamant, in the "Way of the World." That this dramatist was the only one whose homage was well received and presence ever welcome to her, there is no dispute. When a report was abroad that they were about to marry, the minor poets hailed the promised union of wit and beauty; and Congreve illustrated her superiority to himself by eight insulting verses.

The most singular testimony ever rendered to her virtue oc-

curred when Dorset, Devonshire, Halifax, and other peers, were making of that virtue a subject of eulogy, over a bottle. Halifax remarked, they might do something better than praise her; and thereon he put down two hundred guineas, which the contributions of the company raised to eight hundred,—and this sum was presented to the lady, as a homage to the rectitude of her private character.

Mrs. Bracegirdle declined another tribute from Lord Burlington, who had long loved her in vain. "One day," says Walpole, "he sent her a present of some fine old china. She told the servant he had made a mistake; that it was true the letter was for her, but the china for his lady, to whom he must carry it. Lord! the countess was so full of gratitude, when her husband came home to dinner"

Mrs. Bracegirdle lived to pass the limit of fourscore, and to the last was visited by much of the wit, the worth, and some of the folly of the town. On one occasion, a group of her visitors were discussing the merits of Garrick, whom she had not seen, and Cibber spoke disparagingly of his Bayes, preferring in that part his own pert and vivacious son, Theophilus. The old actress tapped Colley with her fan; "Come, come, Cibber," she remarked; "tell me if there is not something like envy in your character of this young gentleman. The actor who pleases everybody must be a man of merit." Colley smiled, tapped his box, took a pinch, and, catching the generosity of the lady, replied: "Faith, Bracey, I believe you are right; the young fellow *is* clever!"

Between 1682 and 1695, few actors were of greater note than Will Mountfort. Handsome Will was the efficient representative of fops who did not forget that they were gentlemen. So graceful, so ardent, so winning as a lover, actresses enjoyed the sight of him pleading at their feet. In the younger tragic characters, he was equally effective. His powers of mimicry won for him the patronage of Judge Jeffries, to gratify whom, and the lord mayor and minor city magnates, in 1685, Mountfort pleaded before them in a feigned cause, in which, says Jacobs, "he aped all the great lawyers of the age in their tone of voice, and in their action and gesture of body," to the delight of his hearers. Queen Mary, disgusted as she was with Mrs. Behn's "Rover," could not but admire the grace, ease, intelligence and genius, of Mountfort, who played the dissolute hero, sang as well as he spoke, and danced with stately dignity. One Captain

Richard Hill, being in "love" with Mrs. Bracegirdle, who despised him, wanted a villain's assistance in carrying off the beautiful actress, and found what he needed, in Lord Mohun. In Buckingham Court, off the Strand, where the captain lodged, the conspirators laid their plans; and learning that Mrs. Bracegirdle, with her mother and brother, was to sup at the house of a friend, Mr. Page, in Princes Street, Drury Lane, they hired six soldiers to assist in carrying her off in a carriage. About ten at night, of the 9th December, 1692, the attempt was made; but what with the lady's screams, the resistance of the friend and brother, and the gathering of an excited mob, it failed; and a strange compromise was made, whereby Lord Mohun and Hill were allowed to unite in escorting her home to her house, in Howard Street, Strand. In that street lived also Will Mountfort, against whom the captain uttered such threats, in Mrs. Bracegirdle's hearing, that she, finding that my lord and the captain remained in the street, the latter with a drawn sword in his hand, and both of them occasionally drinking canary, sent to Mrs. Mountfort, to warn her husband, who was from home, to look to his safety. Warned, but not alarmed, honest Will, who loved his wife and respected Mrs. Bracegirdle, came round from Norfolk Street, saluted Lord Mohun (who embraced him), and said a word or two to his lordship, not complimentary to Hill. Thence, from the latter, words, a blow, and a pass of his sword through Mountfort's body, which the poor actor, as he lay dying on the floor of his own dining room, declared, was given by Hill before Mountfort could draw his sword. The captain fled, but my lord, surrendering to the watchmen of the Duchy of Lancaster, was tried by his peers, fourteen of whom pronounced him guilty of murder; but as above threescore gave a different verdict, Mohun lived on till he and the Duke of Hamilton backed one another to death in the famous duel in Hyde Park. Mrs. Mountfort appealed against the acquittal, but just then, her father, Percival, a player, was sentenced to death for "*clipping*," and she only obtained his pardon by consenting to withdraw the appeal against Lord Mohun.

Mountfort, at the age of thirty-three, and with some reputation as the author of half a dozen dramas, was carried to the burying-ground of St. Clement's Danes, where his remains rest with those of Lowen, one of the original actors of Shakspeare's plays, Tom Otway, and Nat. Lee. His widow became the wife of Verbruggen, a rough diamond, a wild, untaught, yet not an unnatural

actor. So natural, indeed, was he, that Lord Halifax took Oronooko from Powell, who was originally cast for it, and gave it to Verbruggen; such was the power of Lord Chamberlains! He could touch tenderly the finer feelings, as well as excite the wilder emotions of the heart. Powell was a less impassioned player, who felt more than he made his audience feel. In the *Spectator*, No. 290, February, 1712, Powell "begs the public to believe, that if he pauses long in Orestes, he has not forgotten his part, but is only overcome at the sentiment." Verbruggen died in 1708. Among his many original characters were Oronooko, Bajazet, Altamont, and Sullen. He survived his widow about five years. He had more of a rough courtesy than a warm affection for her, and his sword was drawn on the least occasion. James Carlisle, a player, whose comedy, "The Fortune Hunters," was well received in 1689, entered King William's army, in Ireland, and in 1691, he was slain at Aghrim. Carlisle's fellow-actor, Bowen, was a "low comedian" of some talent, and more conceit, who, in 1700, left the stage for a time; "being convinced by Mr. Collier's book," he opened a cane shop, in Middle Row, Holborn; but Bowen was not absent more than a year. He was jealous of his reputation, and died, by Quin's sword, consequently. Of this I shall speak later. Peer came to grief also, but in a different way. The spare man was famous for the Apothecary, in "Romeo and Juliet," and the actor who speaks the prologue to the play, in "Hamlet." Nature had made him for them; but Peer grew fat, and being unable to act any other character with effect, he lost his vocation, and died of grief, in 1713, when he had passed threescore years and ten. Of Norris, or "Jubilee Dicky," a player of an odd, formal, little figure, and a squeaking voice, I shall have ample occasion to speak in a later page. A greater than he was Doggett, who was before the public from 1691 to 1713, and who died in 1721. He was a Dublin man—a failure in his native city, but in London a deserved favourite, for his original and natural comic powers. He always acted Shylock as a serio-comic character, in a red wig. Congreve wrote for him Fondlewife, Sir Paul Pliant, and Ben. This little, lively fellow, "danced the *Cheshire Rounds* full as well as the famous Captain George," says Aston. Somewhat illiterate, he was a gentleman in his acts and bearing. The consciousness of his value, and his independence of character, gave trouble to managers and Lord Chamberlains. On one occasion, having left Drury Lane, at some offence given, he went to Norwich, whence he was

brought up to London, under my Lord's warrant. Doggett lived luxuriously on the road, at the Chamberlain's expense, and when he came to town, Chief Justice Holt liberated him, on some informality in the procedure. Doggett was a staunch Whig. The accession of the house of Brunswick, dated from a first of August. On that day, in 1716, Doggett gave "an *orange*-coloured livery, with a badge, representing Liberty," to be rowed for by six watermen, whose apprenticeship had expired during the preceding year. He left funds for the same race to be rowed for annually, from London Bridge to Chelsea, "on the same day for ever." The match still takes place, with modifications caused by changes on and about the river.

Doggett never took liberties with an audience; Pinkethman was much addicted to the bad habit of inserting nonsense of his own; but the anger of the audience taught him better manners. He was remarkable as a speaking Harlequin. In the "Emperor of the Moon," his wit, audacity, emphasis, and point, delighted the critics, who thought that "expression" would be more perfect if the actor laid aside the mask of Harlequin. Pinkethman did so; but all his expression was thereby lost. It was no longer the saucy Harlequin that seemed speaking. Pinkey, so impudent on all other occasions, was uneasy and feeble on this, and his audacity and vivacity only returned on his again assuming the sable vizard. "He's the darling of *Fortunatus*," says Downes, "and has gained more in theatres and fairs in twelve years than those who have tugged at the oar of acting these fifty."

After the division of the company into two, in 1695, the following new actors appeared between that period and the close of the century. At Drury Lane, Hildebrand Horden, the elder Mrs. Cibber, Johnson, Bullock, Mills, Wilks; and, as if the century should expire, reckoning a new glory,—Mrs. Oldfield. At Lincoln's Inn Fields,—Thurmond, Scudamore, Verbruggen, who joined from Drury Lane, leaving his clever wife there, Pack, and, that this house might boast a glory something like that enjoyed by its rival, in Mrs. Oldfield, in 1700, Booth made his first appearance, with a success which was welcomed by discerning and generous Betterton.

Mrs. Oldfield, Wilks, and Booth, like Colley Cibber, really belong to the eighteenth century, and I shall defer noticing them till we arrive at that period. The rest will require but a few words. Young Horden was a handsome actor, who died of a brawl

at the Rose Tavern, Covent Garden. He and two or three comrades were quaffing their wine, and laughing, at the bar, when some fine gentlemen, in an adjacent room, rudely ordered them to be quiet. The actors returned an answer which brought on a fight, in which the handsome Hildebrand was slain, by a Captain Burgess. Loving women went to look upon Horden's handsome corse. On Tuesday, 30th November, 1697, says Luttrell, "Captain Burgess, *who killed* Mr. Horden, the player, has obtained his Majesty's pardon."

In the last year of the seventeenth century, "the grand jury of Middlesex presented the two play-houses, and also the bear-garden, as nuisances and riotous and disorderly assemblies." So Luttrell writes, in December 1700, at which time, the theatres were "pestered with tumblers, rope-dancers, and dancing men and dogs from France." The grand jury succeeded in preventing play-bills from being posted in the city, and denounced the stage as a pastime which led the way to murder. On the poor players fell all the disgrace; but I shall endeavour to show, that the fault lay rather with the poets. The foremost men of the tuneful brotherhood, of the period from the Restoration to the end of the century, have much to answer for.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DRAMATIC POETS.

Noble, gentle, and humble Authors.

The number of dramatic writers between the years 1659-1700, inclusive, exceeds that of the actors.—Altogether, they amount to above a hundred; none of whose productions can now be called stock-pieces.

Of the actors who became authors, Cibber alone was eminently successful. The remainder, Betterton, Jevon, Mountfort, Carlisle, Harris, Powell, and Doggett, were mere adapters. The noble gentlemen, the amateur rather than professional poets, who contributed towards the public entertainment during the last half of the seventeenth century, may be reckoned at a dozen and a half. Of the two dukes, Buckingham and Newcastle, the former is the more distinguished dramatic writer, but his play of the "Chances" was a mere adaptation from Beaumont and Fletcher. The Duke's dramatic reputation rests on his burlesque tragedy, the "Rehearsal;" in which he is said to have had the assistance of Butler, Martin Clifford, and Dr. Sprat. Written to deride the bombastic tragedies then in vogue, Davenant, Dryden, and Sir Robert Howard are, by turns, struck at, under the person of the poet Bayes; and the irritability of Dryden is warrant that the satire was good. The humour is good, too. The rehearsed play commences with a scene between the royal usher and the royal physician, in a series of whispers; for, as Mr. Bayes remarks, the two officials were plotting against the King; but this fact it was necessary, as yet, to keep from the audience!

Mr. Cavendish, afterwards Duke of Newcastle, was the author of a few plays, two of which were represented after the Restoration. The "Country Captain," and "Variety," were composed in the reign of Charles I. The "Humourous Lovers," and the "Triumphant Widow," subsequently. These are bustling but immoral

comedies, suiting, but not correcting the vices of the times; and singular, in their slip-shod style, as coming from the author of the pompous treatise on horsemanship. Pepys ascribes the "Humourous Lovers" to the duchess. He calls it a "silly play; the most silly thing that ever came upon a stage. I was sick to see it, but yet would not but have seen it, that I might the better understand her." The duke aimed at delineation of character, particularly in "Variety," and in the "Triumphant Widow, or, the Medley of Humours." Johnson grieves over the oblivion which, in his time, had fallen on these works, and later authors have declared that the duke's comedies ought not to have been forgotten. They have at least been remembered by some of our modern novelists in want of incident.

Of the three earls, all of whose pieces were produced previous to 1680, there is not much to be said in praise. George Digby, Earl of Bristol, was the author of one acted piece, "Elvira," one of the two out of which Mrs. Centlivre built up her bit of mosiac, the "Wonder." Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, found leisure in the least feverish hour of some five years' drunkenness, to give to the stage an adaptation of "Valentinian," by Beaumont and Fletcher, in which he assigned a part to Mrs. Barry—the very last that any other lover would have thought of for his mistress. The noble poet, little more than thirty years old, lay in a dishonoured grave when his piece was represented, in 1680; but the young actress just named, gaily alluded, in a prologue, to the demure nymphs in the house who had succumbed, nothing loath, to the irresistible blandishments of this very prince of blackguards.

The Earl of Caryll was of the party who talked of the unpopularity of Shakspeare, and who for the poet's gold offered poor tinsel of their own. His rhymed drama of the "English Princess, or the death of Richard the Third," owed its brief favour to the acting of Betterton, who could render even nonsense imposing. His comedy of "Sir Solomon, or the Cautious Coxcomb," was chiefly from Molière's "Ecole des Femmes."

In 1664, another "lance was broken with Shakspeare" by Lord Orrery, the Lord Broghill of earlier days, and younger son of the "great Earl of Cork." Charles made him a peer—Earl of Orrery. The earl showed his gratitude by deifying kings, and inculcating submissiveness, teaching the impeccability of monarchs, and the extreme naughtiness of their people. Pepys comically bewails the fact, that on going to see a new piece by Orrery, he only sees an old one under a new name, such wearying sameness is there in the rhymed phrases of them all.

Orrery attempted to suppress Shakspeare's "Henry V.," by giving one of his own, in which Henry and Owen Tudor are simultaneously in love with Katherine of France. The love is carried on in a style of stilted burlesque; and yet the dignity and wit of this piece enraptured Pepys—but then he saw it at Court, in December, 1666; Lord Bellasis having taken him to Whitehall, after seeing "Macbeth" at the duke's house;—"and there," he says, "after all staying above an hour for the players, the King and all waiting, which was absurd, saw 'Henry V.' well done by the duke's people, and in most excellent habits, all new vests, being put on but this night. But I sat so high, and so far off, that I missed most of the words, and sat with a wind coming into my back and neck, which did much trouble me. The play continued till twelve at night, and then up, and a most horrid cold night it was, and frosty, and moonshine." In Orrery's "Mustapha" and "Tryphon," the theme is all love and honour, without variation. Orrery's "Mr. Anthony" is a five-act farce, in ridicule of the manners and morals of the Puritans. Over Orrery's "Black Prince," even vigilant Mr. Pepys himself fell asleep, in spite of the stately dances. Perhaps he was confused by the author's illustration of genealogical history; for in this play, Joan, the wife of the Black Prince, is described as the widow of Edmund, Earl of Kent—*her father!* But what mattered it to the writer whose only teaching to the audience was, that if they did not fear God, they must take care to honour the king? Orrery's "Altemira," is a roar of passion, love, jealousy, despair, and murder. In the concluding scene the slaughter is terrific. It all takes place in presence of an unobtrusive individual, who carries the doctrine of non-intervention to its extreme limit. When the persons of the drama have made an end of one another, the quiet gentleman steps forward, and blandly remarks, that there was so much virtue, love, and honour in it all, he could not find it in his heart to interfere, though his own son was one of the victims!

A contemporary of Orrery, young Henry Carey, Viscount Falkland, wrote one piece, the "Marriage Night," which was acted in the Lent of 1664. The last of the dramatic lords of this century was Lord Lansdowne. He reconstructed the "Merchant of Venice," called it the "Jew of Venice," and assigned Shylock to Doggett. Lord Lansdowne's "She-Gallants," is a vile comedy for its "morals," but a vivacious one for its manner. Downes, the prompter, sneers at the offence taken at it by some ladies,

who, he thinks, affected rather than possessed, virtue. In this lord's tragedy of "Heroic Love," Achilles and Briseis are only a little more decent than Ravenscroft's loose rakes and facile nymphs. As for Shylock, Rowe said "I cannot but think the character was *tragically designed* by the author." Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, have eulogised Granville; but, as a dramatic poet, he reflects no honour either on the century in which he was born, or on that in which he died.

And now, coming to a dozen of baronets, knights, and honourables, let us point to two,—Sir Samuel Tuke and Sir William Killigrew, who may claim precedence for their comparative purity, if not for decided dramatic talent. To the first, Charles II. recommended a comedy of Calderon's, which Sir Samuel produced in 1663, under the title of the "Adventures of Five Hours." The public were delighted with this well-constructed comedy. When it was played at Whitehall, Mrs. Pepys saw it from Lady Fox's "*pew*;" and, making an odd comparison, the diarist thought "Othello" a "mean thing," when weighed against the "Adventures;" but his chief praise is, that it is "without one word of ribaldry;" and Echard has added thereto his special commendation as a critic.

Sir William Killigrew was the author of four or five plays, one only of which deserves any notice here,—his comedy of "Pandora." The heroine of this drama resolving to cloister herself up from marriage, allows love to be made to her in jest, and of course, ends by becoming a wife in happy earnest. The author had, at first, made a tragedy of "Pandora." The masters of the stage objected to it in that form; and, it being all the same to Sir William, he converted his tragedy into a comedy! Sir Robert Stapylton was the author of the "Slighted Maid." Dryden has remarked of it, with too much severity, that "there is nothing in the first act that might not be said or done in the second; nor anything in the middle which might not as well have been at the beginning or the end." The *dirty* Earl of Berkshire gave three sons to literature, besides a daughter to Dryden; namely, Sir Robert, James, and Edward. The last-named was the least effective. His characters "talk," but they are engaged in no plot; and they exhibit a dull lack of incident. The most of his six or seven dramas were failures; but from one of them, which was the most original, indecent, and the most decidedly damned, Mrs. Inchbald condescended to extract matter which she turned to good purpose in her "Every one has his Fault." Edward

Howard gratified the court-party in his tragedy of "The Usurper," by describing, under the character of Damocles the Syracusan, the once redoubted Oliver Cromwell; while Hugo de Petra but thinly veiled Hugh Peters; and Cleomenes is said to have been the shadow of General Monk. James Howard came under Buckingham's censure His "English Monsieur" Pepys accepted as a mighty, pretty, witty, pleasant, mirthful comedy. James Howard arranged "Romeo and Juliet" for the stage, with a double denouement—one serious, the other hilarious. If your heart were too sensitive to bear the deaths of the loving pair, you had only to go on the succeeding afternoon to see them wedded, and set upon the way of a well-assured domestic felicity! Of comedies portraying national or individual follies, perhaps the most successful, and the most laughable, was James Howard's "English Monsieur," in which the hero-Englishman, execrates everything that is connected with his country. To him, an English meal is poison, and an English coat, degradation. He can distinguish between the impressions of the footsteps of English and French ladies. The English Monsieur, as a matter of course, loves a French lady, who rejects his suit; but to be repulsed by a French dame had something pleasant in it; "'twas a denial with a French tone of voice, so that 'twas agreeable" Ultimately, the nymph bids him a final adieu, and the not too dejected lover exclaims to a friend: "Do you see, sir, how she leaves us; she walks away with a French step!" Sir Robert Howard was as much pommelled as patted by Dryden. Buckingham dragged him in effigy across the stage, and Shadwell ridiculed the universality of his pretensions by a clever caricature of him, in the "Impertinents," as Sir Positive Atall. The humour which he had in common with his brother James, he exhibited, by giving two opposite catastrophes to his "Vestal Virgins," between which the public were free to choose. Sir Robert has been looked upon as a servile courtier; but people were astounded at the courage displayed by him in his "Great Favourite, or the Duke of Lerma;" in which the naughtiness of the King's ways, and still more that of the women about him, was shown in a light which left no doubt as to the application of the satire. His bombastic periods have died away in the echoes of them which Fielding caught in his "Tom Thumb;" but his comic power is manifested in his "Committee," a transcript of Puritan life, which—applied to quakers, for want of better subjects for caricature—may still be witnessed in country theatres, in the farce of "Honest Thieves." Like many other satirists, Sir Robert could

not detect his own weak points. In his "Blind Lady," he ridicules an old widow in desperate want of a seventh husband; and at threescore and ten, he himself married buxom Mistress Dives, one of the Maids of Honour to Queen Mary. Sir Ludovick Carlell offered a translation of Corneille's "Heraclius" to the players; and that was returned on his hands. From Sir Francis Fane's "Love in the Dark," Mrs. Centlivre has taken Intrigo, the man of business, and turned him into Marplot. Fane, in his unrepresented "Sacrifice," was little courtier enough to make his Tamerlane declare that "princes, for the most part, keep the worst company." More successful than Sir Francis was rollicking Tom, or Major Porter. Tom wrote one play, the "Villain," which raised Sandford's fame, as an actor, to its very highest. Tom was also the author of a rattling comedy, called the "Carnival," but rioting, and bad company and hot temper marred him. He and Sir Henry Bellasys, dining at Sir Robert Carr's, fell into dispute, out of mutual error; fierce words, then a thoughtless blow from Sir Henry, then swords crossing, and tipsy people parting the combatants. Tom's honour was satisfied by passing his sword through the body of his dearest friend. The knight felt the wound was mortal, but he beckoned the less grievously wounded major to him, kissed him, and remained standing, that Tom might not be obstructed in his flight. The friend and poet safe, the knight fell back, and soon after died. There was really noble stuff in some of these dissolute fine gentlemen! But there are no two of them who have so faithfully illustrated themselves, and the times in which they lived, as Sir George Etherege and Sir Charles Sedley. Two more atrocious libertines than these two men were not to be found in the apartments at Whitehall, or in the streets, taverns, and dens of London. Yet both were famed for like external qualities. Etherege was easy and graceful. Sedley so seductive of manner that Buckingham called it "witchcraft," and Wilmot "his prevailing, gentle, art." Etherege was a more accomplished comedy-writer than Sedley, but Sedley was a greater *beast* than Etherege. And, yet, Dryden has extolled Sedley, in the dedication to his "Assignation." The greatest honour Dryden can do himself with posterity "is to be recorded in the number of those men whom you have favoured with your friendship and esteem." "I have found," he says, "a more elegant Tibullus in the person of Sir Charles Sedley," and Dryden praises his *mundus victus*, his modest wit, and his moderation in his cups!

Etherege contributed three comedies to the stage:—"The

Comical Revenge, or Love in a Tub," "She Would if She Could," and the "Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter." Sedley wrote the "Mulberry Garden;" "Antony and Cleopatra," wherein a single incident in Shakspeare's play is spun out into five acts; "Bellamira," in which comedy, partly founded on the "Eunuchus" of Terence, he exhibited the frailty of Lady Castlemaine, and the audacity of Churchill, a translated drama from the French, called the "Grumbler," and a tragedy, entitled the "Tyrant King of Crete." Of all Sedley's pieces, the best is the "Mulberry Garden," for portions of which the author is indebted to Molière's "Ecole des Maris," and on which Pepys's criticism is not to be gainsayed:—"Here and there a pretty saying, and that not very many either." "Bellamira" is remembered only as the play, during the first representation of which the roof of the Theatre Royal fell in, with such just discrimination as to injure no one but the author. Sir Fleetwood Shepherd said that "the wit of the latter had blown the roof off the building." "Not so," rejoined Sedley, "the heaviness of the play has broke down the house, and buried the author in its ruins!" Etherege's comedies were the dear delight of the majority of playgoers. "Love in a Tub" brought £1,000 profit to Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, in a single month of 1664, and was acted before enraptured gallants and appreciating nymphs, at Whitehall. It gave Etherege a name and a position; and when his next comedy appeared, "She Would if She Could," a thousand anxious people, with leisure enough of an afternoon to see plays (it was only at Court that they were acted at night), were turned away from the doors. And yet it was, on the first night, "barbarously treated," according to Dennis, and Pepys found "nothing in the world good in it, and few people pleased with it." The actors, however, were not perfect on the first night. Dennis praised the truth of character, the purity, freedom, and grace of the dialogue; and Shadwell declared that it was the best comedy since the Restoration. Etherege's third comedy, the "Man of Mode," has been described as "perhaps the most elegant comedy, and containing more of the real *manners* of high life, than any one the English stage was ever adorned with." In the latter respect alone is this description true; but the piece could have afforded pleasure, as the *Spectator* remarks, only to the impure. People, no doubt, were delighted to recognise Rochester in Dorimant, Etherege himself in Bellair, and the stupendous ass, Beau Hewitt, in Sir Fopling; but it must have been a weary delight; so debased is the nature

of these people, however truly they represent the manners, bearing, and language of the higher classes. How they dressed, talked, and thought; what they did, and how they did it; what they hoped for, and how they pursued it: all this, and many other exemplifications of life as it was then understood, may be found especially in the plays of Etherege, in which there is a bustle and a succession of incidents, from the rise to the fall of the curtain. But the fine gentlemen are such unmitigated rascals, and the women, girls and matrons, are such unlovely hussies, in rascality and unseemliness quite a match for the men, that one escapes from their wretched society, and a knowledge of their one object, and the confidences of the abominable creatures engaged therein, with a feeling of a strong want of purification, and of that ounce of civet which sweetens the imagination.

Of the remaining amateur writers there is not much to be said. Rhodes's one comedy, "Flora's Vagaries" (1667), gave a capital part to Nelly, and a reputation to the doctor, which he failed to sustain. Corye, in the same year, produced his "Generous Enemies," and that piece was a plagiarism. Ned Revet also exhausted himself in one comedy, "The Town Shifts," which the town found insipid. Arrowsmith was in like plight, and his sole comedy, "The Reformation," was obliged to give way to Shakspeare's "Macbeth," converted into an opera. Nevil Payne was the author of three pieces, in one of which, the "Siege of Constantinople," Shaftesbury and his vices were mercilessly satirized. Tom Rawlins wrote three poor plays, and had as great a contempt for the character of author as Congreve himself. Then there was Leanard, who stole not more audaciously than he was stolen from, when he chose to be original,—Colley Cibber having taken many a point from the "Counterfeits," to enrich "She Would and She Would Not." Pordage was a dull writer. Shipman enjoys the fame of having been highly esteemed by Cowley; and Bancroft, the surgeon, wrote unsuccessfully for the stage. Whitaker's one play, "The Conspiracy," is remarkable for the sensation incident of a ghost appearing, leading Death by the hand! Maidwell's comedy of "The Loving Enemies" (the author was an old schoolmaster), was noticeable for being "designedly dull, lest by satirising folly the author might bring upon his skull the bludgeon of fools." Saunders, and his "Tamerlane the Great," are now forgotten; but Dryden spoke of the author, in an indecent epilogue, as "the first boy-poet of our age;" who, however, though he blossomed as early as Cowley, did not flourish as long. Wilson

was another professional writer, but less successful on the stage than in his recordership of Londonderry. Of his four plays, the "Cheats" excited the greatest sensation. It was first read to the King, who, after hearing thirty lines of it, remarked, "If there be nothing worse in it, you may act it." There was coarse matter in it against Puritan ministers, and the play was prohibited till Denham and Waller had read and reported on it. The managers were told not to bring on the stage anything profane, scandalous, or scurrilous, or they would be no longer protected. A lawyer, Higden, introduced so many drinking scenes into his play, "The Wary Widow," that the players, who tippled their real punch freely, were all drunk by the end of the third act; and the piece was then, there, and thereby brought to an end! Then humble votaries of the muses appeared in Duffet, the Exchange milliner; and in Robert Gould (a servant in the household of Dorset), who was, however a schoolmaster, when his "Rival Sisters," (in which, other means of slaughter being exhausted, a thunder-bolt is employed for the killing a lady) was coldly received. Gould was not a plagiarist, like Scott, the Duke of Roxburgh's secretary, nor so licentious. The public was scandalized by incidents in Scott's "Unhappy Kindness," in 1697. Dr Drake was another plagiarist, who revenged himself in the last-named year, for the condemnation of his "Sham Lawyers," by stating on the title-page that it had been "damnably acted." That year was fatal, too, to Dr. Filmer, the champion of the stage against Collier. Even Betterton and Mrs. Barry failed to give life to the old gentleman's "Unnatural Brother." The most prolific of the amateur writers was Peter Motteux, a Huguenot, whom the revocation of the edict of Nantes brought to England, where he carried on the vocations of a trader in Leadenhall Street, clerk to the foreign department of the Post Office, translator, original writer, dramatist, and "fast man," till the too zealous pursuit of the latter calling found Peter dead, in very bad company, in St. Clements Danes, in the year 1718. Of his seventeen comedies, farces, and musical interludes, there is nothing to be said, save that one called "Novelty," presents a distinct play in each act,—or five different pieces in all. By different men, Peter has been diversely rated. Dryden asserted, that Corneille might envy the "alliance of his tripled unity," and yet Dryden wondered "that he should overmatch the most and match the best!"

Motteux projected an opera, to be called "The Loves of Europe," in which were to be represented the methods employed in various

nations, whereby ladies' hearts are triumphantly won. It was an odd idea; but Peter Motteux was odd in everything. And it is even oddly said of him, "that he met with his fate in trying a very odd experiment, highly disgraceful to his memory!"

Hard-drinking, and *gallantry*, killed Charles Hopkins, son of the Bishop of Londonderry. He has the merit, however, of not being indecent, a fact which the epilogue to his "Boadicea," furnished by a friend and spoken by a lady, deplores. In indecent language, it regrets that uncleanness of jest is no longer acceptable to the town!

Walker merits notice, less for his two pieces, "Victorious Love," and "Marry or do Worse," than for the fact that this young Barbadian was the first actor whom Eton school gave to the stage. He appeared, when only eighteen, in the first-named piece, but quickly passed away to the study of the law and the exercise of the latter in his native island. Boyer, a refugee Huguenot, like Motteux, adapted Racine's "Iphigenia in Aulis," for representation. Oldmixon, an old, unscrupulous, party-writer; and Crauford, historiographer for Scotland to Queen Anne, have left no name of note among dramatic writers. It was to the worst of the above-named, and of those yet remaining to be named, that Dryden applied the lines:

> "—— this our age such authors doth afford,
> As make whole plays, and yet scarce write one word.
> Who in this anarchy of wit rob all,
> And what's their plunder their possession call."

CHAPTER IX.

PROFESSIONAL AUTHORS.

The men who took up dramatic authorship as a vocation, during the last half of the seventeenth century, amount to something more than two dozen. I include in these Sir John Vanbrugh, because he preferred fame as an author to fame as an architect; and Congreve, despite the reflection that the ghost of that writer would protest against it if he could. When Voltaire called upon him, in London, the Frenchman intimated that his visit was to the "author." "I am a *gentleman*," said Congreve. "Nay," rejoined the former, "had you been only a gentleman, you would never have received a visit from me at all."

All of these professional authors were sons of "gentlemen," save three, Davenant, Cowley, and Dennis, whose sires were, respectively, a vintner, a hatter, and a saddler. The sons, however, received a collegiate education. Cowley distinguished himself at Cambridge, but Davenant left Oxford without a degree, and from the former University Dennis was expelled, in March, 1680, "for assaulting and wounding Sir Glenham with a sword." Cambridge yielded Dryden, Lee, and Rymer. From Oxford came Settle, degreeless as Davenant, with Wycherley, Otway, Southerne, and Dilke. Dublin University yielded Tate, Brady, Southerne, Congreve, (who went to Ireland at an early age,) and Farquhar. Douay gave us Gildon, and we are not proud of the gift. Lee, Otway, and Tate were sons of clergymen. Little Crowne's father was an Independent minister in Nova Scotia, and Crowne himself laid claim, fruitlessly, to a vast portion of the territory there. Cibber was an artist, on the side of his father the statuary, and a "gentleman" by his mother. Idleness and love of pleasure made dramatic poets of most of these gentlemen. Shadwell, Ravenscroft, Wycherley, Durfey, Bankes, Southerne, Congreve,

and Rowe, were all apprenticed to the law; but the study was one too dull for men of their temperament, and they all turned from it in disgust. Rymer, who was wise enough to stick to the law, tried to persuade the public that Shakspeare was even of less merit than it was the fashion to assign to him. In 1678, he boldly asserted that "in the neighing of a horse and the growling of a mastiff, there is as lively expression and more humanity than, many times, in the tragical flights of Shakspeare." To show how much better he understood the art, Rymer published, in 1678, the tragedy he could not get represented, "Edgar, or the English Monarch." He professes to imitate the ancients, and his tragedy is in rhyme; he accuses Shakspeare of anachronisms, and his Saxon princess is directed to "pull off her patches!" The author was ambitious enough to attempt to supersede Shakspeare, and he pooh-poohed John Milton by speaking of *Paradise Lost* as "a thing which some people were pleased to call a poem." Dennis was a better critic than the author of the *Fœdera*, and a more voluminous writer. He spoke of Tasso as compassionately as the village-painter did of Titian; but his usefulness was acknowledged by the commentator, who remarked that men might construct good plays by following his precepts, and avoiding his examples. Boyer has said something similar of Gildon, "he wrote an *English Art of Poetry*, which he had practised himself very unsuccessfully in his dramatic performances." "Dennis, the critic," says Sterne, "hated a pun and the insinuation of a pun, most cordially."

Cowley, as a playwright, failed, and was mortified at his failure. He re-trimmed a play of his early days, the "Guardian," and called it the "Cutter of Coleman Street." All there is broad farce, in which the Puritan "congregation of the spotless" is coarsely ridiculed, and cavalierism held up to admiration. The audience condemned the former as "profane," and Cowley's cavaliers were found to be such scamps that he was suspected of disloyalty. Gentle as he was by nature, Cowley was irritable under criticism. "Is it profane," he asks, "to deride the hypocrisy of those men whose skulls are not yet bare upon the gates since the public and just punishment of it," namely, profanity. Thus were the skulls of the Commonwealth leaders tossed up in comedy. The "Cutter" rallied a little, and then was laid aside; but some of its spars were carried off by later gentlemen, who have piqued themselves on their originality.

Several of Cowley's contemporaries made various attempts to *improve* Shakspeare. Davenant took "Measure for Measure,"

and "Much Ado about Nothing," and manipulated them into one comedy, the "Law against Lovers." He *improved* "Macbeth" and "Julius Cæsar;" and Dryden, who re-arranged "Troilus and Cressida," united with Davenant in a destruction of all that was beautiful in the "Tempest." Nat Lee had sense enough to refrain from marring Shakspeare. Shadwell corrected the great poet's view of "Timon of Athens," which, as he not too modestly observed, he "made into a play." Crowne re-modelled two parts of "Henry VI.," in which he made Clifford swear like a drunken tapster, and taught that a king is sacred, and not to be even *thought* ill of, let him be never so hateful a miscreant. Ravenscroft, in *his* "Titus Andronicus," only piled the agony a little more solidly and comically. There was less excuse for Otway, who seized "Romeo and Juliet," stripped the lovers of their romance, clapped them into a classical costume, and converted the noble but obstinate houses of Capulet and Montagu into riotous followers of Marius and Sylla, Caius Marius the younger wishing he were a glove upon the hand of Lavinia Metella, and a sententious Sulpitius striving in vain to be as light and sparkling as Mercutio. Tate, in altering "King Lear," and "Coriolanus," undertook to "rectify what was wanting;" and accordingly, he abolished the fool, made silly lovers of Edgar and Cordelia, and converted the solemn climax into comedy, by presenting the old king and his matchless daughter, hand in hand, alive and merry, as the curtain descended. Tate maintained, that he wrought into perfection the rough and costly material left by Shakspeare. "In my humble opinion," said Addison, "it has lost half its beauty." In the last year of the century, the last attempt to improve our poet was made by Gildon, who produced *his* idea of what "Measure for Measure" should be, by omitting all the comic characters, and adding much nonsense of his own to that of Davenant. These men were like Pepys, who speaks of "Henry VIII." as "a simple thing, made up of a great many patches." The "Tempest," he thinks, "has no great wit—but yet good, above ordinary plays." "Othello" was to him "a mean thing." "Twelfth Night," "one of the weakest plays I ever saw on the stage." "Macbeth," he liked or disliked, according to the humour of the hour. Finally, he records, in 1662, of the "Midsummer's Night's Dream," which he "had never seen before, nor ever shall again," that "it is the most insipid, ridiculous play, that ever I saw in my life." Walpole thought so too!

It may be said of Davenant, that, if he was quick of fancy and

careful in composition, the result is not answerable to the labour expended on it. One of the pleasantest features about Dryden was, that as he grew old he increased in power. Shadwell's characters have the merit of being well conceived, and strongly marked; and Shirley (a poet belonging to an earlier period), has only a little above the measure of honour due to him, when he is placed on a level with Fletcher. Crowne is justly placed in the third rank of dramatists; but he had originality, lacking the power to give it effect. Ravenscroft had neither invention nor expression; yet he was a prolific writer, a caricaturist, but without truth or refinement; altogether unclean. Wycherley, on the other hand, was admirable for the epigrammatic turn of his stage conversations, the aptness of his illustrations, the acuteness of his observation, the richness of his character-painting, and the smartness of his satire; in the indulgence or practice of all which, however, the action of the drama is often impeded, that the audience may enjoy a shower of sky rockets.

Wycherley had, indeed, "Plautus' wit," and an obscenity rivalling that of the "Curculio;" but he had none of the pathos which is to be found in the "Rudens." Wycherley was also described as having the "art of Terence and Menander's fire." If by the first, Pope meant skill in invention of plot, Wycherley surpassed the Carthaginian; and as to "Menander's fire," in Wycherley it was no purifying fire. Wesley was not likely to illustrate a sermon by a quotation from Wycherley, as St. Paul did by citing a line from Menander. We are charmed by the humour of Wycherley; but we are *not* instructed by his sense, nor swayed by his judgment, nor warmed honestly by his spirit; his unblushing profligacy ruins all. But if his men and women are as coarse as Etherege's or Sedley's, they are more clever people; so clever, indeed, that Sheridan has not been too proud to borrow "good things" from Wycherley, as he has also from Cowley. Wycherley is more natural and consistent than Congreve, whose Jeremy speaks like an oracle, and is as learned, though not so nasty as his master. Congreve's wit seems to shine at best but as a brilliant on a dirty finger. As for his boasted originality, Valentine and Trapbois are Don Juan and M. Dimanche; and as for Valentine, as the type of a gentleman, his similes smack more of the stable-yard than the drawing-room; and there is more of impertinent prattle generally among Congreve's characters than among those of Wycherley. His ladies are a shade more elegant than those of the latter poet; they are more brilliant, through

being decked with diamonds; but not a jot the more virtuous or attractive on that account.

In coarseness of sentiment, the copiers of *artists* like Congreve and Wycherley, could not go beyond their prototypes; and in the expression of it, they had neither the wit of their greatest, nor the smartness of their less famous, masters. This coarseness dates from earlier days than those of the Restoration; and Dryden, who remembered the immorality of Webster's comedies, seems to have thought that the Restoration was to give the old grossness to the stage, as well as a new king to the country. It is certain, that a large portion of the public protested against this return to an evil practice, and hissed his first piece, "The Wild Gallant," played in the little theatre in Vere Street, Drury Lane, in 1662. "It was not indecent enough for them," said the poet, who promised "not to offend in the way of modesty again." His "Kind Keeper, or Mr. Limberham," under which name the Duke of Lauderdale was satirised, and which Dryden held to be his best comedy, was utterly condemned. "Ah!" said he, "it was damned by a cabal of keepers!" It never occurred to him that the public might prefer wit to immorality. When "fair ladies," censured the procedure of Indemora and Melesinda, in the last act of "Aurungzebe," he said, "If they who arraign them fail not more, the world will never blame their conduct." His was seasoned to what he maintained was the taste of the town, and in the prologue, he defended the fashion he followed.

Dryden may have been "the modestest of men in conversation;" but he stooped to gratify the baser feelings of an audience, when he composed for one class the filthy dish served up in his "Wild Gallant," and for another the more dangerous fare for youthful palates, so carefully manipulated in the Alexis and Cælia song, in his "Mariage à la Mode." It is true that Dryden lived to be ashamed of such offence against propriety. In his ode on the death of Mrs. Anne Killigrew, there is a cry of anguish at the remembrance of how he and his fellows had abused the gift of poesy and polluted the stage. In his "Art of Poetry," too, grave counsel is given to young writers of comedy to avoid all uncleanness and dull buffoonery,—the old crimes of him who gives the counsel.

Later in the half century, Jeremy Collier attacked Congreve and Wycherley, as men who applied their natural gifts to corrupt the stage. The public were scandalised at passages in Congreve's "Double Dealer." The play was not a success, and the fault was

laid to its gross inuendoes, and its plainer indecency. "I declare," says the author, in the preface, "that I took a particular care to avoid it, and if they find any, it is of their own making, for I did not design it to be so understood. I would not have anybody imagine that I think this play without its faults, for I am conscious of several, and ready to own 'em; but it shall be to those who are able to find 'em out." In later years, Sheridan expressed contempt for people who found that the grossness of Congreve was not compensated for by his wit. Congreve (he says) must be played unmutilated or be shelved! He compared his great predecessor to a horse whose vice is cured at the expense of his vigour. Thomson, who was personally unacquainted with Congreve, sets him in Heaven, for his virtues! Of his pen, Thomson says it was—

> "Powerful in every grace, and skilled
> To win the list'ning soul with virtuous charms!"

And, again,—

> "Nature was his,
> Bold, sprightly, various; and superior Art
> Curious to choose each better grace, unseen
> Of vulgar eyes; wild delicacy free;
> Though labour'd, happy: and though strong, refined!"

In Dryden's "Cleomenes," the hero resists the blandishments of Cassandra. "Had I been left alone with a young beauty," said a stripling critic to glorious John, "I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That, sir," said Dryden, "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you, you are no hero!" Lee said even a better thing to the coxcomb who visited him in Bedlam, during Lee's four years sojourn there. "It is an easy thing," observed this fellow, "to write like a madman." "No," answered Lee, "it is not an easy thing to write like a madman; but it is very easy to write like a fool." Dryden confessed that he was not qualified to write comedies. He was ashamed, too, of his "Tyrannic Love," and laughed at the rant and fustian of his Maximin. He allowed that in his "Conquest of Granada" the sublimity burst into burlesque, and he could censure the extravagance of Almanzor as freely as he did the bombast of Maximin. Still, he was uneasy under censure; he was disappointed at the reception given to his "Assignation," and complained of the critics, especially of Settle. His best defender was Charles II. Some courtiers ventured to wonder at the King going so often to see "The Spanish Friar," as the piece was a wholesale robbery.

"Odds fish!" exclaimed Charles, "steal me another such a comedy, and I'll go and see it as often as I do "The Spanish Friar." "All for Love" is Dryden's most carefully written play, and the author repeatedly declared that the scene in Act I, between Antony and Ventidius, was superior to anything he had ever composed. Dryden was not a poet for mere love of song. "As I am no successor to Homer in his wit, so neither do I desire to be in his poverty." So he writes to Lord Mulgrave in the dedication to "Aurungzebe," "'Tis for your Lordship," he adds, "to stir up that remembrance in his Majesty, which his many avocations of business have caused him, I fear, to lay aside." Charles said it was the best of his tragedies, but added no pudding to the praise. All Dryden's criticism of other poets is affected by that which he wrote on Sackville's "Gorboduc." "It is truly a scandal," says Pope, "that men" (Oldham was one) "should write with contempt of a piece which they never once saw, as those two poets did, who were ignorant even of the sex as well as of the sense of 'Gorboduc.'"

Had Shadwell not been a Whig, we should have heard less of him in parallels or contrasts with Dryden. Of his dramatic pieces, amounting to about a dozen and a half, there is scarcely one that does not please more in perusal than any by the poet of the greater name,—always excepting Dryden's "Love for Love." Shadwell's "Squire of Alsatia," "Bury Fair," "Epsom Wells," and some others, are good character comedies. For attacking Dryden's "Duke of Guise," Dryden pilloried the assailant, as "Mac Flecnoe;" but when he says that "Shadwell never deviates into sense," he has as little foundation for his assertion as he has for his contempt of Wilmot, when he writes in the *Essay upon Satire*, "Rochester I despise for want of wit." Rochester may have praised Shadwell because he hated Dryden; but Dryden's aspersions on the other two spring more from his passion than his judgment. Whether Shadwell died of opium or apoplexy is not well ascertained. At his decease, in 1692, he was in his fifty-third year. Brady preached his funeral sermon, and Tom Brown intimated, in an epigram, that for so fat a carcase, the Devil would need a cart. But Shadwell is no more to be judged by the testimony of his enemies, than Flecnoe, the ex-jesuit is, by the ridicule of Dryden, who stooped to steal, from the admirable sketch of the English stage, prefixed to Flecnoe's "Love's Kingdom," the idea which Dryden more fully carried out in his "Essay on Dramatic Poesy."

We come now to Sir John Vanbrugh, who was a successful play-wright. Of Vanbrugh's ten or eleven plays, that which has longest kept the stage is the "Relapse," still acted, in its altered form, by Sheridan, as the "Trip to Scarborough." This piece was produced at the Theatre de l'Odeon, in Paris, in the spring of 1862, as a posthumous comedy of Voltaire's! It was called the "Comte de Boursoufle," and had a "run." The story ran with it that Voltaire had composed it in his younger days for private representation! Critics examined the plot, enjoyed its wit, and asked "if Voltaire did not write this piece, who *could* have written it?" The reply was given at once from this country; but the French critics gave no sign of awarding honour where honour was due, and probably this translation of the "Relapse" may figure in future French editions as an undoubted work by Voltaire!

On looking back upon the names of these authors by profession, the brightest still is Otway's, of whom his critical biographers have said that, in tragedy, few English poets ever equalled him. His comedies are certainly detestable; but of his tragedies, "Venice Preserved" alone is ever now played. The "Orphan" is read; "Alcibiades," "Don Carlos," "Titus and Berenice," are forgotten. Successful as he is in touching the passions, and eminently so in dealing with ardent love, Otway is inferior to Lee, in the latter respect. Leigh Hunt called him the poet of sensual pathos, for, affecting as he sometimes is, he knows no way to "the heart but through the senses." Hunt adds,—"that when he leaves the sublime for the pathetic, 'no writer' can produce more powerful effects than his!" Dryden saw no fault in him. Of Lee, Mrs. Siddons entertained the greatest admiration. She read his "Theodosius," with such feeling, as to wring sighs from the heart and tears from the eyes. She saw in Lee's poetry, says Campbell, "a much more frequent capability for stage effect than a mere reader would be apt to infer from the superabundance of the poet's extravagance." Addison accuses Lee *and Shakspeare* of a spurious sublimity; and, he adds, that "in these authors, the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of style!"

I think, that of the whole brotherhood, Southerne, after he left the army and had sown his wild oats, was the most prudent, and not the least successful. He was a perfect gentleman; he did not lounge away his days or nights in coffee houses or taverns, but after labour, cultivated friendship in home circles, where virtue and moderate mirth sat at the hearth. In his bag-wig, his black velvet dress, his sword, powder, brilliant buckles, and self-

possession, Southerne charmed his company, wherever he visited, even at fourscore. He kept the even tenor of his way, owing no man anything; never allowing his nights to be the marrer of his mornings; and at six and eighty carried a bright eye, a steady hand, a clear head and a warm heart. As Southerne originally wrote "Oronooko," that tragedy could not now be represented. The mixture of comic scenes with tragic is not its worst fault. His comedies are of no worth whatever, except as they illustrate the manners and habits of his times. They more resemble those of Ravenscroft than of Congreve or Wycherley. Dryden did not fairly describe them when he wrote, comparing him with Terence,—

> Like him thy thoughts are true, thy language clean,
> E'en lewdness is made moral in thy scene!

But we have tarried long enough with the chief gentlemen dramatists. Let us now attend to the ladies.

CHAPTER X.

THE DRAMATIC AUTHORESSES.

During this half century, there were seven ladies who were writers for the stage. These were the virtuous Mrs. Philips, the audacious Aphra Behn, the notorious Mrs. Manley, the gentle Mrs. Cockburn, the aristocratic Mrs. Boothby (of whom nothing is known, but that she wrote one play, called "Marcatia," in 1669), fat Mrs. Pix, and that thorough Whig, Mrs. Centlivre. The last four belong also to the beginning of the eighteenth century. The "virtuous Mrs. Philips," of Evelyn, the "matchless Orinda," of Cowley, took her "Pompey" and "Horace" from Corneille. In those pieces, represented at court, the poetess endeavoured to direct the popular taste, and to correct it also. By her death her good intentions were frustrated, and her place was occupied by the most shameless woman who ever took pen in hand, to corrupt the public.

Aphra Behn was a Kentish woman, whose early years were passed at Surinam, where her father, Johnson, resided, as lieutenant-general. After a wild training in that fervid school, she repaired to London, married a Dutchman, named Behn, (who straightway disappeared,) penetrated, by means of her beauty, to the court of Charles II., and obtained, by means of her wit, an irregular employment at Antwerp,—that of a spy. The letters of her Dutch lovers belong to romance; but there is warrant for the easy freedom of this woman's life. On her return to England, her political reports and prophecies were no more credited than the monitions of old, by Cassandra; so she abandoned England to its fate, and herself "to pleasure and the muses." Her opportunities for good were great, but she abused them all. She might have been an honour to womanhood;—she was its disgrace. She might have gained glory by her labours;—but she chose to reap

infamy. Her pleasures were not those which become an honest woman; and as for her "Muses," she sat not with them on the slopes of Helicon, but dragged them down to her level, where the Nine and their unclean votary wallowed together in the mire. There is no one that equals this woman in downright nastiness, save Ravenscroft and Wycherley; but the latter of these had more originality of invention and grace of expression. To these writers, and to those of their detestable school, she set a revolting example. Dryden preceded her, by a little, on the stage; but Mrs. Behn's trolloping muse appeared there before the other two writers I have mentioned, and was making unseemly exhibition there after the coming of Congreve. With Dryden she vied in indecency, and was not overcome. To all other male writers of her day she served as a provocation and an apology. Intellectually, she was qualified to lead them through pure and bright ways; but she was a mere harlot, who danced through uncleanness, and dared them to follow. Remonstrance was useless with this wanton hussey. Her private life has found a champion in a female friend, whose precious balsam breaks the head it would anoint. According to this friend, Mrs. Behn had numerous good qualities; but "she was a woman of sense, and consequently loved pleasure;" and she was "more gay and free than the modesty of the precise will allow."

Of Aphra Behn's eighteen plays, few are original, but she adapted skilfully; and she was never dull. Her lying epitaph in the cloisters at Westminster, runs thus:—

> Here lies a proof that wit can never be
> Defence enough against mortality.
> Great poetess, oh thy stupendous lays
> The world admires, and the Muses praise!

Mrs. Manley, the poor daughter of an old royalist had some reason to depict human nature as bad, in man and in woman. The young orphan trusted herself to the guardianship of a seductive kinsman, who married her when he had a wife still living. This first wrong destroyed her, but not her villainous cousin; and unfortunately, the woman upon whom the world looked cool, incurred the capricious compassion of the Duchess of Cleveland. When the caprice was over, and Mrs. Manley had only her own resources to look upon, she scorned the aid offered her by General Tidcombe, and made her first venture for the stage in the tragedy of "Royal Mischief," produced in 1696. It is all desperate love,

of a very bad quality, and indiscriminate murder, relieved by variety in the mode of killing; one unfortunate gentleman, named Osman, being thrust into a cannon and fired from it, after which his wife, Selima, is said to be "Gathering the smoking relics of her lord!" Her other pieces are the "Lost Lover," "Almyna," founded on the story of the Caliph who was addicted to marrying one day, and beheading his wife the next; and "Lucius," a semi-sacred play, on the supposed first Christian king of Britain. They were unsuccessful. Mrs. Manley survived till 1724. When not under the "protection" of a friend, or in decent mourning for the lovers who died mad for her, she was engaged in composing the *Memoirs of the New Atalantis*,—a satire against the Whig ministry, the authorship of which she courageously avowed, rather than that the printer and publisher should suffer for her. The Tory ministry which succeeded, employed her pen; and with Swift's Alderman Barber, the Tory printer, she resided till her death, mistress of the house, and of the alderman.

Contemporary with Mrs. Manley was Miss Trotter, better known as Mrs. Cockburn, wife and widow of an English clergyman. She was a learned young lady, whose speculations took her to the church of Rome, from which in later years she seceded. She was but seventeen, when, in 1696, her sentimental tragedy, "Agnes de Castro" was played at Drury Lane. She produced five pieces, all of a sentimental but refined class,—illustrating, love, friendship, repentance, and conjugal faith. She wrote a defence of Locke, while her reverend husband was pursuing an account of the Mosiac deluge. She is remembered as a good and well-accomplished woman;—the opposite of Mrs. Behn and all her heroines.

Fat Mrs. Pix came from Oxfordshire, and was a woman of genius and much flesh. Her comedies are full of life; her tragedies more than brimful of loyalty. Her plots were not ill-conceived, but they were carried out by inexpressive language.

Susanna Freeman was the maiden name of Mrs. Centlivre. She was the orphan daughter of a Parliamentarian, and of a mother who died too early for the daughter's remembrance. Anthony Hammond is said to have been in love with her, a nephew of Sir Stephen Fox to have married her, and a Captain Carrol to have left her a widow—all before she was well out of her teens. We find her in 1706 playing "Alexander the Great," at Windsor, where she also married Mr. Centlivre, Queen Anne's chief cook. Of Mrs. Centlivre's nineteen plays, three are still well known;

the "Busy Body," the "Wonder," and "A Bold Stroke for a Wife." When she offered the first to the players, the actors unanimously denounced it. Hitherto the authoress had written a tragi-comedy or two, the comic scenes in which alone gave evidence of strength, but not always of delicacy. She had, in others, stolen wholesale from Molière, and the old English dramatists. She produced a continuation to the "Busy Body" in "Marplot," but we do not care for it; and it is not till her fourteenth piece, the "Wonder" (in 1714), that she again challenges admiration. It is superior to the "Wrangling Lovers," from which it is partly taken, and which had no such hero as the Don Felix of Wilks. The "Bold Stroke for a Wife" was first played in 1718, is entirely her own, and has had a wonderful succession of Colonel Feignwells, from C. Bullock down to Mr. Braham! This piece has such vivacity, fun, and quiet humour in it, that it has outlived many a one that began with greater triumph; and in "the real Simon Pure," first acted by Griffin, it has given a proverb to the English language. Mrs. Centlivre had unobtrusive humour, sayings full of significance rather than wit, wholesome fun in her comic, and earnestness in her serious characters. In *her* pictures of life, she attracts the spectator. There may be, now and then, something, as in Dutch pictures, which had been as well away; but this apart, all the rest is true, and pleasant, and hearty; the grouping perfect, the colour faithful and enduring, despite the cruel sneer of Pope, who, in the *Life of Curll*, sarcastically alludes to her as "the cook's wife in Buckingham Court," in which vicinity to Spring Gardens Mrs. Centlivre died, in 1723. Pope also struck her with a line in the *Dunciad*, where, "At last Centlivre found her voice to fail," was his retaliation for her having written a ballad against Pope's *Homer*, before she had read it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AUDIENCES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Royalty liberally patronised the theatres, after the Restoration. On one night, Charles and the Duke and Duchess of York are at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre; on another, the Queen of Bohemia is there, "brought by my Lord Craven." A week later, Charles and "Madame Palmer" are at the theatre in Drury Lane, with the Duke of York and his wife. "My wife," says Pepys, "to her great content had a full sight of them all the while." The King's Madame Palmer became, in fact, an attraction; seated between Charles and his brother. The play was Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair," with the puppets, and all its virulent satire against the Puritans.

At the Cockpit in Drury Lane, Charles's consort, Catherine, was exhibited to the English people for the first time on an autumn afternoon of 1662, when Shirley's "Cardinal" was represented.

Soon after this, in November, there is again a crowded audience to greet the King and Queen, with whom appear the Castlemaine, and, near her, the Duke of Monmouth, all beauty and pretty assurance. The Queen used to sit silent and sad, in such company.

Pepys speaks scornfully of the audience at the Duke's Theatre. The house was "full of *citizens!*" "There was hardly," says the fastidious son of an honest tailor, "a gallant man or woman in the house!" Early in January, 1663, the Duke of York and his wife honoured a play of Killigrew's by their presence at Drury Lane. "They did show," writes the journalist, "some impertinent and methought unnatural dalliances there, before the whole world, such as kissing of hands, and leaning upon one another." But there were worse scenes than these conjugal displays at the

King's House. In January, 1664, the "Indian Queen" was played at Drury Lane. Lady Castlemaine was present before the King arrived. When he entered his box, the Countess leaned over some ladies who sat between her and the royal box, and whispered to Charles. Having been thus bold in face of the audience, she arose, left her own box and appeared in the King's, where she took a place between Charles and his brother. The King and the whole audience were put out of countenance by this audacity, exhibited to prove that she was not so much out of favour as the world believed. What a contrast is presented by the appearance of Cromwell's daughter, Lady Mary, in her box at this same theatre, with her husband, Viscount Falconbridge! Pepys praises her looks and her dress, and suggests a modest embarrassment on her part as the admiring spectators began to gaze curiously on Oliver's loved child; "she put on her vizard, and so kept it on all the play, which of late has become a great fashion among the ladies, which hides the whole face."

But we now meet with Nell Gwyn, too, in front of the house. She is gossiping with Pepys, who is ecstatic at the condescension; or she is blazing in the boxes, prattling with the young and scented fops, and impudently lying across any three of them, that she may converse as she pleases with a fourth. And there is Sir Charles Sedley smiling with or at the actors of these scenes, or sharply criticising the play and players, or flirting with vizard masks in the pit. Pepys once took his place on "the upper bench next the boxes," as having "the advantage of seeing and hearing the great people, which may be pleasant when there is good store." Pepys could hear them,

> "Selling facetious bargains, and propounding,
> That witty recreation called dum-founding."

Pepys was happiest with a baronet like Sir Phillip Frowd at his side, and behind him a couple of impertinently pretty actresses, like Pierce and Knipp, pulling his hair, drawing him into gossiping flirtations, and inducing him to treat them with fruit. When Etherege's comedy, "She Would if she Could," was first played, in February, 1668, to one of the most crowded, critical, and discontented audiences that had ever assembled in the Duke's House, the pit was brilliant with peers, gallants, and wits. There sat Buckingham, and Buckhurst, and Sedley, and the author, with many more; and there went on, as the audience waited till the pelting rain outside had ceased to fall, comment and counter-comment on the merits of the piece and of the actors. Etherege

found fault with the players, but the public as loudly censured the piece as insipid, yet allowing it to possess a certain share of wit and roguishness. Here is another group of illustrations from Pepys, of the "front of the stage;" the house is the Duke's, the play "Macbeth." "The King and Court there, and we sat just under them and my Lady Castlemaine. The King and Duke of York minded me, and smiled upon me, at the handsome woman near me, but it vexed me to see Moll Davies, in a box over the King's and my Lady Castlemaine's, look down upon the King, and he up to her; and so did my Lady Castlemaine once, to see who it was; but when she saw Moll Davies, she looked like fire, which troubled me."

Evelyn wrote earnestly against the licentiousness of the stage, but he went to see plays, nevertheless. He sat ill at ease in the public theatres, because they were abused, he says, "to an atheistical liberty." The invitation to see Lord Broghill's "Mustapha" played before the King and Queen, at Whitehall, in September, 1666, was a command. Evelyn attended; but he looked around, and bethought him of the London that was lying in charred ruins, and he sorrowingly records his disapproval of "any such pastime in a time of such judgments and calamities." With better times come weaker censures; and the representation of the "Conquest of Granada," at Whitehall, in 1671, wins his admiration for the "very glorious scenes and perspectives, the work of Mr. Streeter, who well understands it." In the following year he takes a whole bevy of maids of honour to the play. Among them was that grave maid, Mistress Blagg, better known to us by his graceful sketch of her life, as Mrs. Godolphin. In 1675 Evelyn saw her playing in Crowne's masque-comedy, "Calisto, or the Chaste Nymph." His friend acted in a noble but mixed company—all ladies—namely, the Ladies Mary and Anne, afterwards Queens of England, the Lady Henrietta Wentworth, afterwards the favourite of the Duke of Monmouth, and Miss Jennings, subsequently the sharp-witted wife of the Duke of Marlborough. The Whitehall audiences must have had, on some occasions, an uncourtly aspect; "people giving money to come in," writes Evelyn, "which was very scandalous, and never so before at Court-diversions."

Of the turbulence of audiences in those days, there are many evidences. In 1669, Mrs. Corey gratified Lady Castlemaine, by giving an imitation of Lady Harvey, through the whole of the part of Sempronia, in "Catiline's Conspiracy." Lady Harvey had influence enough to lock Mrs. Corey up, for her impertinence. Lady Castlemaine had still greater influence; and not only was

Mrs. Corey released, but she was "ordered to act it again, worse than ever." Doll Common, as the actress was called, for her ability in playing that part in the "Alchymist," repeated the imitation, but not without opposition; for Lady Harvey hired a number of persons, some of whom hissed Doll, while others pelted her with fruit, and the King looked on, amazed at the contending factions, whose quarrels subsequently brought him much weariness in the settling. It was then a custom to return the price of admission to all persons who left the theatre before the close of the first act. Consequently, many shabby persons were wont to force their way in without paying, on the plea that they did not intend to remain beyond the time limited. Thence much noisy remonstrance on the part of the door-keepers, who followed them into the house; and therewith such derangement of the royal comfort, that a special decree was issued, commanding payment to be made on entering; but still allowing the patron of the drama to recover his money, if he withdrew on or before the close of the first act.

On the 2nd of February, 1679, at the Duke's theatre, the King's French favourite, the Duchess of Portsmouth, was blazing with rouge, diamonds, and shamelessness, in the most conspicuous seat in the house. Some tipsy gentlemen in the street hard by, hear of her wit and handsome presence, and the morality of these drunkards is straightway incensed. The house is panic-stricken at seeing these virtuous Goths rushing into the pit, with drawn swords in one hand, flaming torches in the other; and with cries against "the Duchess of Portsmouth, and other persons of honour." The rioters, not satisfied with thrusting their rapiers at the arms, sides, and legs of the affrighted people in the pit, hurl their blazing torches among the astounded actors on the stage! A panic and a general flight ensue. The house is saved from destruction; but as it is necessary to punish somebody, the King satisfies his sense of justice, by pressing hard upon the innocent actors, and shutting up the house during the royal pleasure!

Much liquor, sharp swords and angry tempers, combined to interrupt the enjoyment of many a peaceful audience. An angry word, passed, one April evening of 1682, in the pit at Dorset Gardens, between Charles Dering and Mr. Vaughan, led to recrimination and sword-drawing. The two young fellows, not having elbow-room in the pit, clambered on to the stage, and fought there, to the greater comfort of the audience, and with a more excited fury on the part of the combatants. Dering got a thrust

from the Welshman which stretched him on the boards; whereupon the authorities intervened, and put Master Vaughan under restraint, till Dering's wound was declared not to be mortal.

"As familiar a duck as an actress in a tyring room," is one of the similes in the "Plain Dealer." In the prologue to "Mariage à la Mode," Dryden makes the actress who spoke it, say of the officers who had then gone to the war:

> " 'Twas a sad sight before they mareh'd from home,
> To see our warriors in red waistcoats come,
> With hair tuck'd up, into our 'tiring room."

The 'tiring rooms of the actresses were then open to the fine gentlemen who frequented the house. They stood by at the mysteries of dressing, and commented on what they beheld and did not behold, with such breadth and coarseness of wit, that the more modest, or least impudent ladies, sent away their little hand-maidens. The dressing over, the amateurs lounged into the house, where the white wigs jarred with the vizards, in Fop's corner, talked loudly with the pretty orange girls, listened when it suited them, and at the termination of the piece, crowded again into the 'tiring room of the most favourite and least scrupulous of the actresses. Among these gallants was a Sir Hugh Middleton, who, on the second Saturday of February, 1667, was among the damsels dressing for the play, behind the stage of old Drury. The knight was so unpleasantly critical on the nymphs, that sharp-tongued Beck Marshall bade him keep among the ladies of the Duke's house, since he did not approve of those who served the King. Sir Hugh burst out with a threat, that he would hire his footman to kick her. The pretty but angry Rebecca notified the outrage to the champion of insulted dames, the King. Nothing immediately came of it; and on Tuesday, there was Sir Hugh, glowering at her from the front of the house, and waylaying her, as she was leaving it with a friend. Sir Hugh whispers a ruffian, who follows the actress, and presses upon her so closely, that she is moved by a double fear,—that he is about to rob, and perhaps stab her. A little scream scares the bravo for a minute or so. He skulks away, but anon slinks back; and, armed with the first offensive missile he could pick up in a Drury Lane gutter, he therewith anoints the face and hair of the much-shocked actress, and then, like the valiant fellows of his trade, takes to his heels. The next day, sweet as Anadyomene rising from the sea, the actress appeared before the King, and charged

Sir Hugh with being the abettor of this outrage. About a fortnight later a royal decree was issued, which prohibited gentlemen from entering the 'tiring rooms of the ladies of the King's theatre. For some nights, the gallants sat ill at ease among the audience; but the journals of the period show that the nymphs must have been as little pleased with this arrangement as the fine gentlemen themselves, who soon found their way back to pay the homage of flattery to the most insatiable of goddesses. The gallantry certainly often took a most ungallant form. Rebecca Marshall had to seek protection from Mark Trevor of the Temple, who, she says, in a petition to the King, had "affronted her both on and off the stage, attacked her in a coach with his sword, &c., and threatened vengeance for her complaining of him to the Lord Chamberlain."

Returning to the front of the stage, we find the ladies in the boxes subjected to the audible criticisms of "the little cockerells of the pit," with whom the more daring damsels entered into a smart contest of repartees. These wit-combats were listened to with interest, by the town fops and the rustic young squires who came to the theatre in cordivant gloves, and were quite unconscious of poisoning the affected fine ladies with the smell of them. Grave people sat in the middle of the pit, at the side of which the "hot Burgundian" plied the vizard-masks. In the front seat sat "critics in plume and white vallancy-wig." The poets used to assert that all the wit of the pittites was stolen from the plays which they saw acted. It seemed the privilege of the box-loungers to sit all the evening by a mistress, or to blaze from "Fop's corner," or to mark the modest women, by noting those who did not use their fans through a whole play, nor turn aside their heads, nor, by blushing, discover more guilt than modesty. Thrice happy was she who found the greatest number of slaves at the door of her box, waiting obsequiously to hand or escort her to her chair. These *beaux* were hard to fix, so erratic were they in their habits. They ran, as Gatty pertinently has it, "from one play-house to the other play-house; and if they like neither the play nor the women, they seldom stay any longer than the combing of their perriwigs, or a whisper or two with a friend, and then they cock their caps, and out they strut again." With fair and witty strangers these gay fellows, their eyebrows and perriwigs redolent of the essence of orange and jessamine, entered into conversation, till a gentleman's name, called by a door-keeper in the passage, summoned him to impatient companions, waiting for him

outside; when he left the "censure" of his appearance to critical observers, like those who ridiculed the man of mode, for "his gloves drawn up to his elbows and his perriwig more exactly curled than a lady's head newly dressed for a ball." Crowne makes his Sir Courtly Nice (1685) say, that comedy was so ill-bred and saucy, that ladies kept away, and that the house was filled with "our odious sex, and bad smells;" but "at tragedy the house is all lined with beauty, and then a gentleman may endure it."

"I remember," "says Cibber, "the ladies were then observed to be decently afraid of venturing bare-faced to a new comedy, till they had been assured they might do it without insult to their modesty; or if their curiosity were too strong for their patience, they took care at least to save appearances, and rarely came in the first days of acting but in masks."

Cibber says of the beaux of the seventeenth century, "They had more of the stateliness of the peacock in their mien;" those of the eighteenth, imitated "the pert air of a lapwing." The fine gentlemen among the audience had, indeed, the credit of being less able to judge of a play than of a peruke; and Dryden speaks of an individual as being "as invincibly ignorant as a town-sop judging of a new play." Dilke, in the "Pretender," describes a chairman exclaiming, "How often have we trotted with such a powdered son of nine fathers, from the Chocolate House, to the play, and never yet saw a groat of his money!" The beaux' oath was "zauns," it being token of a rustic blasphemer to say "zounds." A country squire might say, "bless us!" but it was the mark of a man of fashion to cry, "dem me!" When the gallery was opened, *gratis*, to footmen, after the close of the fourth act of the play, it was the custom, when these fellows passed the money-taker, to name their master, who was supposed to be in the boxes; but many frauds were practised. A stalwart, gold-laced, thick-calved, irreverent lacquey swaggered past money and check-taker one afternoon, and named "the Lord ——," adding the name which the Jews of old would never utter, out of fear and reverence. "The Lord ——!" said the money-taker to his colleague, after the saucy footman had flung by, "who is he?" Can't say," was the reply; "some poor Scotch lord, I suppose!"

Returning to the pit, I find, with the critics there, fops, in their noisy corner, grand with, dangling knee-fringes, and the bib-cravat; and a sprinkling of clerical gentlemen. "There was found," says a newspaper paragraph, (1695) "in the pit of the

playhouse, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, on Witsun Eve, a qualification signed by the Right Honourable the Lord Dartmouth to the Reverend Mr. Nicholson, to be his Chaplain Extraordinary; the said qualification being wrapped up in a black taffety cap, together with a bottle-screw, a knotting needle, and a ball of sky-colour and white knotting. If the said Mr. Nicholson will repair to the pit-keeper's house, in Vinegar Yard, at the Crooked Billet, he shall have the moveables restored, giving a reasonable gratitude."

The sincerity of the audiences of those days is something doubtful, if Dryden's affirmation be true, that "in all our tragedies the audience cannot forbear laughing when the actors are to die: 'tis the most comic part of the whole play." A few lines in a letter from Vanbrugh to the Earl of Manchester, written on Christmas Day, 1699, will show the position and hopes of the stage, as that century was closing. "Matters run very low with the players this winter. If Congreve's play don't help 'em they are undone. 'Tis a comedy, and will be played about six weeks hence. Nobody has seen it yet." The same letter informs us that Doggett (of whom there is no account, during the years, 1698, 1699, 1700), had been playing for a week at the above theatre, for the sum of £30! This is the first instance of the "starring" system. If Doggett was the first *star*, he was also an early stroller, and head of a strolling company. Each member wore a brocaded waistcoat, rode his own horse, and was everywhere respected, as a gentleman. So says Aston, reminding one of Hamlet's "Then came each actor on his ass."

Steele, in the Tatler, (No. 12,) speaks of the manager, Mac Swiney, as "little King Oberon," who mortgaged his whole empire (the theatre) to *Divito,* (Christopher Rich) whom Steele thus describes: "He has a perfect art in being unintelligible in discourse and uncomeatable in business. But he, having no understanding in his polite way, brought in upon us to get in his money, ladder-dancers, rope-dancers, jugglers, and mountebanks, to strut in the place of Shakspeare's heroes and Jonson's humorists."

CHAPTER XII.

A SEVEN YEARS' RIVALRY.

In novelties, during the first season of the eighteenth century, Drury led the way with Cibber's "Love Makes a Man." It was not excelled by the "Humour of the Age," by Baker, nor by Settle's mad operatic tragedy, the "Siege of Troy," with a procession in which figured six white elephants, nor by Farquhar's sequel to his "Constant Couple," "Sir Harry Wildair," or Mrs. Trotter's "Unhappy Penitent," which gave way in turn for Durfey's comedy, "The Bath, or the Western Lass." The play itself was of no great value. It justified Dryden's remark to a friend, some years before, who had said, "Mr. Durfey cannot write a worse piece." "If you knew my friend Tom, as I do, you would know that he'll write many a worse piece."

In the same season, the company at Lincoln's Inn Fields produced, Mrs. Pix's "Double Distress," the "Czar of Muscovy," and the "Lady's Visiting Day," by Burnaby. After which, the hilarity of the public was challenged by the production of Granville (Lord Lansdowne's) "Jew of Venice,"—"improved" from Shakspeare. In this piece, Bassanio (Betterton) is the most prominent character; and though the whole piece was converted into a comedy, Doggett is said to have acted Shylock with much effect, and without buffoonery. Granville gave the profits of the play to one who needed them, Dryden's son.

Gildon's dull piece of Druidism, "Love's Victim, or the Queen of Wales," failed, and Corye's "Cure for Jealousy" brought the list of unsuccessful novelties to a close. The author attributed his failure to the absurd admiration of the public for Farquhar!

In 1702, the Drury Lane company commenced the production of novelties with Dennis's "Comical Gallant,"—an "improved" edition of Shakspeare's "Merry Wives," which gave way to the

"Generous Conqueror," of the ex-fugitive Jacobite, Bevil Higgons, who made even his fellow Jacobites laugh, by his bouncing line, "The gods and god-like kings can do no wrong." The next novelty, Farquhar's "Inconstant," with Wilks for Young Mirabel, did not affect the town hilariously. Still less pleased were the public with the next play, tossed up for them in a month, and condemned in a night, Burnaby's "Modish Husband." Not much more successful was Vanbrugh's "False Friend," a *comedy* in which there is a murder enacted before the audience! But, the next new piece, the "Funeral, or Grief à la Mode," was a greater success. The author was six and twenty years of age; this was his first piece, and his name was Steele. All that was known of him was, that he was a native of Dublin, had been fellow-pupil at the Charter House with Addison, had left the University without a degree, and was said to have lost the succession to an estate in Wexford by enlisting as "a *private gentleman* in the Horse Guards." He was the wildest and wittiest young dog about town, when in 1701, he published, with a dedication to Lord Cutts, to whom he had been private secretary, and through whom he had been appointed to a company in Lord Lucas's Fusiliers, his *Christian Hero*, a treatise in which he showed what he was not, by showing what a man ought to be. It brought the poor fellow into incessant perplexity, and even peril. Some thought him a hypocrite, others provoked him as a coward, all measured his sayings and doings by his maxims in his *Christian Hero*, and Dick Steele was suffering in the regard of the town, when he resolved to redeem the character which he could not keep up to the level of his religious hero, by composing a comedy! He thoroughly succeeded, and there were troopers enough in the house to have beat the rest of the audience into shouting approbation, had they not been well inclined to do so, spontaneously. The "Funeral" is the merriest and the most perfect of Steele's comedies. The characters are strongly marked, the wit genial, and not indecent. Steele was among the first who set about reforming the licentiousness of the old comedy. The most genuine humour in the piece was in the satire against undertakers. Take the scene in which Sable (Johnson) is giving instructions to his men, and reviewing them the while:—"Ha, you're a little more upon the dismal. This fellow has a good mortal look—place him near the corpse. That wainscot-face must be a-top o' the stairs. That fellow 's almost in a fright, that looks as if he were full of some strange misery, at the end

o' the hall! So!—But I'll fix you all myself. Let's have no laughing now, on any provocation. Look yonder at that hale, well-looking puppy! You ungrateful scoundrel, didn't I pity you, take you out of a great man's service, and show you the pleasure of receiving wages? Didn't I give you ten, then fifteen, then twenty shillings a week, to be sorrowful? And *the more I give you the gladder you are!*" This sort of humour made of Steele the spoiled child of the town. "Nothing," said he. "ever makes the town so fond of a man as a successful play." Old Sunderland and younger Halifax, patronised Steele for his own, and for Addison's sake; and the author of the new comedy received the appointment of *Writer of the Gazette*. After a closing of the houses during Bartholomew Fair, the Drury Lane Company met again; and again won the town by Cibber's "She Would and She Would Not." This excellent comedy contrasts well with the same author's "Careless Husband." In the latter there is much talk of action; in the former there is much action during very good talk. There is much fun, little vulgarity, sharp epigrams on the manners and morals of the times, good humoured satire against popery, and a succession of incidents which never flags from the rise to the fall of the curtain. Far less successful was Drury with the last and eighth new play of this season, Farquhar's "Twin Rivals," for the copyright of which the author received £15. 6*s*. from Tonson. Farquhar, perhaps, took more pains with this than with any of his plays; but, after Steele and Cibber, it failed to attract.

To the eight pieces of Drury, Lincoln's Inn opposed half a dozen, only one of which has come down to our times, namely, Rowe's "Tamerlane," with which the company opened the season: —Tamerlane, Betterton; Bajazet, Verbruggen; Axalla, Booth; Aspasia, Mrs. Barry. In this piece, Rowe left sacred for profane history, and made his tragedy so allusive to Louis XIV. in Bajazet, and to William III. in Tamerlane, that it was for many years represented at each theatre on every recurring 4th and 5th of November, the anniversary of the birth and of the landing of King William. There is life in Rowe's tragedy, which, with some of the bluster of the old, has some of the sentiment of a new school. Tamerlane has been a favourite part with many actors. Lady Morgan's father, Mr. Owenson, made his first appearance in it, under Garrick's rule; but a Tamerlane with a strong Irish brogue and comic redundant action, created different sensations from those intended by the author, and though the audience did

not hiss, they laughed abundantly. To "Tamerlane" succeeded "Antiochus the Great," a tragedy, full of the old love, bombast, and murder, by a Mrs. Wiseman, Lord Orrery's posthumous play "Altemira," "The Gentleman Cully," in which Booth fooled it to the top of his bent, in the only English comedy which ends without a marriage, the "Beaux' Duel," and the "Stolen Heiress,"—these sleep in deserved oblivion.

In the season of 1703, Drury Lane produced seven, and Lincoln's Inn Fields six, pieces. Those at Drury were Baker's "Tunbridge Walks;" Durfey's "Old Mode and the New," a satirical comedy, on the fashions of Elizabeth's days and those of Anne; "Fair Example, or the Modish Citizens," by Estcourt, a strolling player, but soon afterwards a clever actor in this company; Mrs. Carroll's "Love's Contrivance;" Wilkinson's "Vice Reclaimed;" Manning's "All for the Better;" and Gildon's "Patriot, or the Italian Conspiracy." None of them brought profit, during a season when "Macbeth" was the only one of "Shakspeare's" plays which was performed.

The season of 1703, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was distinguished by the success of Rowe's "Fair Penitent,"—the one great triumph of the year. The other novelties, by Oldmixon, Charles Boyle (the worthy antagonist of Bentley, touching the genuineness of the "Epistles of Phalaris"), are not worth noticing. The great event of the season was the "Fair Penitent:" Lothario, Powell; Horatio, Betterton; Altamont, Verbruggen; Calista, Mrs. Barry; Lavinia, Mrs. Bracegirdle. Rowe had, in his "Tamerlane," thundered, after the manner of Dryden; had tried to be as pathetic as Otway, and had employed some of the bombast of Lee. But he lacked strength to make either of the heroes of that resonant tragedy, vigorous. In devoting himself, henceforth, to illustrate the woes and weaknesses of heroines, he discovered where his real powers lay; and Calista is one of the most successful of his portraitures. There is gross plagiarism from Massinger's "Fatal Dowry," but there is a greater purity of sentiment in Rowe, who leaves, however, room for improvement in that respect, by his successors. The Fair Penitent is more angry at being found out, than sorry for what has happened, but all the sympathy of the audience is freely rendered to Calista. The tragedy, however, has lost the popularity it retained during the last century, when even Edward, Duke of York, and Lady Stanhope, enacted Lothario and Calista, in the once famous "private theatre" in Downing Street.

Shakspeare, in name, at least, re-appears more frequently on the stage during the Drury Lane season of 1703—4, when "Hamlet," "King Lear," "Macbeth," "Timon of Athens," "Richard III.," the "Tempest," and "Titus Andronicus," were performed. These, however, were the "improved" editions of the poet. The novelties were, the "Lying Lover," by Steele; "Love, the Leveller;" and the "Albion Queens." It was the season in which great Anne fruitlessly forbade the presence of vizard-masks in the pit, and of gallants on the stage: recommended cleanliness of speech, and denounced the shabby people who occasionally tried to evade the money-takers. Steele, in his play, attempted to support one of the good objects which the Queen had in view; but in striving to be pure, after his idea of purity, and to be moral, after a loose idea of morality, he failed altogether in wit, humour, and invention. He thought to prove himself a good churchman, he said, even in so small a matter as a comedy; and in the character of comic poet, "I have been," he says, "a martyr and confessor for the church, for this play was damned for its piety." This is as broad an untruth as anything uttered by the "Lying Lover" himself. Steele was condemned for stupidity in a piece, the only ray of humour in which, pierces through the dirty, noisy, drunken throng of gallows-birds in Newgate. That Steele seriously intended his play to be the beginning of an era of "new comedy," is, however, certain. In the prologue, it was said of the author—

> "He aims to make the coming action move
> On the tried laws of Friendship and of Love.
> He offers no gross vices to your sight,—
> Those too much horror raise, for just delight."

Steele's comedy was a step in a right direction; and his great fault was pretending to be half-ashamed of having made it. It was one of the first pieces played without a mingling of the public with the players. The other new pieces produced this season at Drury Lane are not worthy of record.

Lincoln's Inn failed to distinguish itself this season. Walker, Trapp, and Dennis, were the poets; but they produced nothing that has lived.

The season of 1704-5, at Drury Lane, is notable for the production of Cibber's "Careless Husband." In this comedy a really serious and eminently successful attempt to reform the licentiousness of the drama was made by one who had been himself a great offender. In Lord Morelove we have the first lover

in English comedy, since licentiousness possessed it, who is at once a gentleman and an honest man. In Lady Easy, we have, what was hitherto unknown, or laughed at,—a virtuous, married woman. It is a conversational piece, not one of much action. The dialogue is admirably sustained, not only in repartee, but in descriptive parts. There is some refinement manifested in treating and talking of things unrefined, and incidents are pictured with a master's art. Cibber's greatest claim to respect seems to me to rest on this elegant and elaborate, though far from faultless comedy. So carefully did he construct the character of the beautiful and brilliant coquette, Lady Betty Modish, whose waywardness and selfishness are finally subdued by a worthy lover, that he despaired finding an actress with power enough to realise his conception. It was written for Mrs. Verbruggen (Mountfort), but she was now dead; Mrs. Bracegirdle *might* have played it; but "Bracy" was not a member of the Drury Lane company. There was, indeed, Mrs. Oldfield, but Colley could scarcely see more in her than an actress of promise. Reluctantly he entrusted the part to her, foreboding discomfort; but there ensued a triumph for the actress and the play, for which Colley was grateful to the end of his life. He eulogised her excellence of action, and her "personal manner of conversing." He adds, "There are many sentiments in the character of Lady Betty Modish that I may almost say, were originally her own, or only dressed with a little more care than when they negligently fell from her lively humour; had her birth placed her in a higher rank of life, she had certainly appeared in reality what in this play she only excellently acted, an agreeably gay woman of quality, a little too conscious of her natural attractions."

Neither Cibber's friends nor foes seem to have at all enjoyed his success. They would not compromise their own reputation by questioning the merit of this rare piece of dramatic excellence, but they insinuated that he was not the author. It was written by Defoe, by the Duke of Argyll, by Mrs Oldfield's particular friend, Maynwaring! Congreve, who had revelled in impurity, and stoutly asserted his cleanliness, ungenerously declared, "Cibber has produced a play consisting of fine gentlemen and fine conversation, all together, which the ridiculous town, for the most part, likes." Dr. Armstrong analysed the play, and pointed out its defects, without noticing its merits; but Walpole has enthusiastically declared that it "deserves to be immortal." It has failed in that respect, because its theme, manners, follies, and

allusions, are obsolete, to say nothing of a company to follow, even decently, the original cast, which included Sir Charles Easy, Wilks; Lord Foppington, Cibber; and Lady Betty Modish, Mrs. Oldfield. Steele's "Tender Husband, or the Accomplished Fools," in which he had Addison for a coadjutor, was produced in April, 1704. Addison's share therein was not avowed till long subsequently. This comedy was chiefly a satire on the evils of romance reading, and was of a strictly moral, yet decidedly heavy tendency. The other novelties, "Arsinoe, Queen of Cyprus," an opera; and plays by Dennis, Motteux, and Mac Swiney—oblivion wraps them all. In this season Dick Estcourt made his first appearance in London as Dominic, in the "Spanish Friar." Of Shakspeare's plays, "Hamlet," "Henry IV.," and "Macbeth," were frequently repeated during the season. "Arsinoe" merits a word in passing, as being the first attempt to establish opera in England, after the fashion of Italy. "If this attempt," says Clayton, the composer, who understood English no better than he did music, "shall be a means of bringing this manner of music to be used in my native country, I shall think my study and pains very well employed." The principal singer was Mrs. Tofts, who had been singing, at Lincoln's Inn Fields, against Marguerite de l'Epine, the pupil of Greber. The Earl of Nottingham and the Duke of Bedford went into ecstacy at the song and shake of "the Italian lady," as Marguerite was called. The proud Duke of Somerset supported native talent, in Mrs. Tofts, whose too zealous servant, Anne Barwick, one night went to Drury Lane, and assailed Marguerite with hisses and oranges, to the great disgust of her honest mistress. In such discord did opera commence among us.

The season of the rival company was passed in two houses:—at Lincoln's Inn Fields, from October till the April of 1705, when the company with the "four capital B.'s," Betterton, Booth, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, removed to the house in the Haymarket, built by Vanbrugh, under a subscription filled by thirty persons of quality, at £100 each, for which they received free admissions for life. Under his licence at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Betterton produced nothing of note this season but Rowe's "Biters," a satirical comedy, which failed. At the end of the season he consigned his licence to Vanbrugh, under whom he engaged, as leading tragedian. Vanbrugh opened on the 9th of April, with an opera, the "Triumph of Love." It failed, and after other unsuccessful attempts, and many mischances, the first

season at the Queen's Theatre, on the site of our present Opera House, came to an unsatisfactory conclusion.

The season of 1705-6, at Drury Lane, would have been equally unsatisfactory, but for one great success to balance failures in Farquhar's "Recruiting Officer," played on the 8th April, 1706, with a cast, including Plume, Wilks; Brazen, Cibber; Kite, Estcourt; Sylvia, Mrs. Oldfield; Rose, Mrs. Susan Mountfort. This lively comedy was so successful that Tonson, in a fit of liberality, gave the author fifteen pounds, and a supplementary half crown, for the copyright. The money was welcome, for poor George was in sorry need, yet buoyant spirits. Critics foretold that this play would live for ever; but unfortunately it has been found impossible to separate the wit and the lively action from the more objectionable parts, and we may not expect to see its revival. Farquhar has drawn on his own experiences in the construction, and all the amiable people in the piece were transcripts of good Shrewsbury folk, whose names have been preserved. "Santlow, famed for dance," first bounded on to the stage during this season, and the heart of Mr. Secretary Craggs bounded in unison. But, perhaps, the most notable circumstance of the year was, that the chapel in Russell Court was then building; and that it was under difficulties, to extricate it from which the Drury Lane company played "Hamlet," and handed over the handsome proceeds to the building committee!

Vanbrugh's two comedies, the "Confederacy" and the "Mistake" (the latter still acted under the title of "Lovers' Quarrels"), with much of other novelty, a fair company of actors, troops of dancers, and a company of vocalists with Dick Leveredge and Mrs. Tofts at the head of them, failed to render the often broken but prolonged season of 1705-6, which begun in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and terminated at the house in the Haymarket, profitable. In many respects it did not deserve to be, for Vanbrugh, with more wit and humour, and more judgment in adaptation than Ravenscroft, sought to bring back comedy to the uncleanliness in which the latter writer had left it. There came a cry from the outer world, against this condition of things. Lord Gardenstone indignantly remarked of the "Confederacy:"—"This is one of those plays which throw infamy on the English stage and general taste, though it is not destitute of wit and humour. A people must be in the last degree depraved, among whom such public entertainments are produced and encouraged. In this symptom of degenerate manners we are, I believe, unmatched by any nation

that is, or ever was, in the world." In the "Confederacy," Doggett's fame as an actor culminated. He dressed Moneytrap with the care of a true artist. On an old threadbare, black coat, he tacked new cuffs and collar to make its rustiness more apparent. The neck of the coat was stuffed so as to make the wearer appear round-shouldered, and give greater prominency to the head. Wearing large, square-toed shoes with huge buckles over his own ordinary pair, made his legs appear smaller than they really were. Doggett could paint and mould his face to any age. Kneller recognised in him a superior artist. Sir Godfrey remarks, that "*he* could only copy nature from the originals before him, but that Doggett could vary them at pleasure, and yet keep a close likeness." The public were more pleased with this piece than with Rowe's "Ulysses," in which Penelope gave so bright an example of conjugal duty and maternal love, in the person of Mrs. Barry, to the Ulysses of Betterton, and the Telemachus of Booth.

That public would, perhaps, have cared more for the grace and nature of Addison's "Rosamond," produced at Drury Lane, in March, 1707, with its exquisite flattery cunningly administered to the warrior who then dwelt near Woodstock, had it been set by a less incompetent musician than William's old band-master, Clayton. The piece was played but three times, and the author's witty articles against the absurdities of Italian opera are supposed, by some writers, to have owed their satire to the failure of "Rosamond."

In the season of 1706-7, at the Haymarket, Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Bracegirdle first played together,—the younger actress ultimately winning or vanquishing the town. Cibber, too, joined the company, at the head of whom remained Betterton and Mrs. Barry. Every effort was made to beat opera, by a production of pieces of a romantic or classical caste; and Addison's pen, in prologue on the stage, or in praise in the *Spectator*, was wielded in the cause of the players, his neighbours. The greatest attempt to overcome opera was made, by producing a truly and drily-classical tragedy, by Edmund Smith, called "Phædra and Hippolytus," which the public would not endure above three nights, to the disgust and astonishment of Addison, as recorded in the *Spectator*. Smith, or Neale rather,—the former being a name he adopted from a benevolent uncle,—was not the man to give new lustre to the stage. Scarcely a year had elapsed since he had been expelled from Oxford University; the brilliancy of his career there could not save him from that disgrace. His success on the stage, when

he made this his sole attempt, was perhaps impeded by the exactions of actors and actresses at rehearsals, to suit whose caprices he had to write fresh verses, and furnish them with "tags," whereby to secure applause, as they made their *exit*. The play fell, and the author with it. The once brilliant scholar descended to become a sot. The once best-dressed fop of his day, became known by the nickname of "Captain Rag;" and as neither his wild life nor his careless style of costume seriously affected his great personal beauty, the women, tempering justice with clemency, called him the Handsome Sloven! This scholar, poet, critic and drunkard, attempted to recover his reputation, by writing a tragedy, on the subject of Lady Jane Grey; but he died in the attempt.

A greater dramatist than he, died this season, in a blaze of triumph from the stage, under the dull cloud of poverty, at home,—George Farquhar. His joyous "Beaux Stratagem," first played on the 8th of March, 1707, was written in six painful weeks. Tonson gave him £30 for the right of printing, and this, with what he received from the managers, solaced the last weeks of the life of the ex-captain, who had sold his commission, and had been deluded by a patron who had promised to obtain preferment for him. Farquhar had lost everything, but sense of pain and flow of spirits. He died in April, 1707, while the public were being enchanted by his comedy, so rich in delineation of character and in variety of incident. It was thus cast: Aimwell, Mills; Archer, Wilks; Scrub, Norris; Foigard, Bowen (then newly come from Ireland); Sullen, Verbruggen (his last original character); Gibbet, Cibber; Mrs. Sullen, Mrs. Oldfield.

The season of 1707-8 was the last for a time of the two opposing houses. At the end of it the two companies were *ordered*, by the despotic and absolute Lord Chamberlain, to unite. The patent for Drury Lane was then held by Rich and Sir Thomas Skipwith. *The Monthly Mirror*, for March, 1798, says that Rich's father was an attorney, to one of whose clients Sir Thomas owed a large sum of money. Being unable to pay it, he put up a part of his theatrical patent to auction, and Rich bought the share for £80! In Christopher Rich's time a *quarter* share was sold to Colman for £20,000. Sir Thomas now consigned what share he held to Colonel Brett. It was by Colonel Brett's influence that the union of the companies was effected, under the patent held by him and Rich; and henceforward the great house in the Haymarket was given up to Swiney and Italian Opera, at

the following prices for admission :—Stage boxes, 10*s.* 6*d.*; Boxes, 8*s.*; Pit, 5*s.*; Lower Gallery, 2*s.* 6*d.*; Upper Gallery, 1*s.* 6*d.* Let me note here that in May, 1708, Vanbrugh wrote to Lord Manchester :—"I have parted with my whole concern (the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket) to Mr. Swiney, only reserving my rent, so he is entire possessor of the Opera, and most people think will manage it better than anybody. He has a good deal of money in his pocket, that he got before by the acting company, and is willing to venture it upon the singers." There was fine quality left in that old acting company, albeit the town sometimes neglected them, and managers,—

> "—— in despair their empty pit to fill,
> Set up some foreign monster in a bill."

Dryden says of the old stagers :—

> "Their setting sun still shows a glimm'ring ray,
> Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay;
> And better gleanings their worn soil can boast
> Than the crab vintage of the neighb'ring coast."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE UNITED AND THE DISUNITED COMPANIES.

The United Companies, which now commenced acting at Drury Lane, were, in some respects, perhaps never equalled. Betterton only "played" occasionally. The young Kentish attorney, and future editor of Shakspeare, Theobald, gave the first of about a score of forgotten dramas to the stage. Taverner, the proctor's "Maid the Mistress," was barely listened to. The only success was achieved by Mrs. Centlivre's "Busy Body" (Marplot, by Pack), and *that* was a success of slow growth. Baker satirized the women: but the public hissed his "Fine Lady's Airs," almost as much as they did Tom Durfey's "Prophets." Then there was the "Appius and Virginia," of Dennis, of which nothing survives but the theatrical thunder. In this piece, Betterton acted the last of his long list of the dramatic characters created by him,—Virginius. Shortly after this, took place that famous complimentary benefit for the old player, when the pit tickets were paid for at a guinea each. The actors could scarcely get through "Love for Love," in which he played Valentine, for the cloud of noble patrons clustered on the stage, when guineas by the score were delicately pressed upon him for acceptance, and Mistresses Barry and Bracegirdle supported him at the close; while the former spoke the epilogue, which was the dramatic apotheosis of Betterton himself.

On the following June, actors and patentees were at issue; and their dissensions were not quelled by the Lord Chamberlain closing the house. Pope, writing to Cromwell, August 19, 1709, says:—"Drury lies desolate, in the profoundest peace, and the melancholy prospect of the nymphs yet lingering about its beloved avenues, appears no less moving than that of the Trojan dames lamenting over their ruined Ilium. What now can they hope, dispossessed of their ancient seats, but to serve as captives to the

insulting victors of the Haymarket? Collier, the M.P. for Truro, obtained, for political reasons, a licence to open Drury Lane. He took forcible possession of the house, and he opened Drury on November 23rd, 1709, under the direction of Aaron Hill, with "Aurungzebe," and Booth for his leading tragedian. Booth wished to appear in a new tragedy, and Hill wrote in a week, that "Elfrid" which the public damned in a night. He allowed that it was "an unpruned wilderness of fancy, with here and there a flower among the leaves, but without any fruit of judgment." Then, the trial of putting the fairy dancer, Santlow, into boy's clothes, and giving her the small part of the Eunuch in "Valentinian" to play, and an epilogue to be spoken in male attire, succeeded so well, that she was cast for Dorcas Zeal in Charles Shadwell's "Fair Quaker of Deal," wherein she took the town, and won the heart of Booth. The Queen's Theatre, Haymarket, commenced its season on the 15th of September, 1709, with Shakspeare. The play was "Othello," with Betterton in the Moor; but there was between the acts a performance by "a Mr. Higgins, a posture-master from Holland!" The only great event of the season was the death of Betterton, on the 27th of April, 1710, of which I have already spoken at length. During the trial of Sacheverel, and its attendant excitement, the theatre was badly attended, but pieces were acted by subscription, to make the manager some amends.

About this period, the word *encore* was introduced at the operatic performances in the Haymarket, and very much objected to by plain-going Englishmen. It was also the custom of some who desired the repetition of a song, to cry *altra volta! altra volta!* The Italian phrase was denounced as vigorously as the French exclamation; and a writer in the *Spectator* asks, when it may be proper for him to say it in English? and would it be vulgar to shout *again! again!*

The season of 1710-11 at either house produced no novelty of of merit. There was sad lack of success. But, of the actors themselves, the *Tatler* gives a good testimony:—"You see a wonderful benevolence among them towards the interests and necessities of each other."

Thence came the united company that played at Drury under a licence granted to Collier, Wilks, Cibber, and Doggett, for whom a halcyon score of years are now beginning On the other hand, the opera only brought ruin, and drove into exile its able but unlucky manager, Swiney.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNION, STRENGTH, PROSPERITY.

NATURALLY jubilant is Colley Cibber when giving the history of the united companies, and of a prosperity of twenty years' duration. Cibber and his fellows deserved to prosper; and £1,500 profit to each of the three managers, in one year, showed what might be done, without the aid of "those barbarous entertainments," of acrobats and similar personages, for which Cibber had a wholesome horror. Cibber yielded to the hastiness of Wilks, and lent himself to the waywardness of Doggett. The newspapers, and especially *Mist's Journal*, Cibber says, "took upon them very often to censure our management. For these critics, Colley had a supreme contempt If we were insignificant, said he, and played only to empty houses, these fellows would be silent. When the fashion of patronising the folly of pantomimes came in, Cibber reluctantly produced one at Drury Lane, but only "as crutches to the plays." In the first season the poets were less successful than the players; of Johnson's "Wife's Relief." Cromwell wrote to Pope:—"We have had a poor comedy of Johnson, not Ben, which held seven nights, and has got him £300, for the town is sharp-set on new plays." The great night of this season was that in which Philips' version of Racine's "Andromaque" was played, —the 17th of March, 1712. Of the "Distressed Mother," the following was the original cast:—Orestes, Powell; Pyrrhus, Booth; Pylades, Mills; Andromache, Mrs. Oldfield; Hermione, Mrs. Porter. The English piece is as dull as the French one; but there is great scope in it for declamatory actors, and Booth led the town on this night to see in him the undoubted successor of Betterton. Before the tragedy was acted, the *Spectator* informed the public that a master-piece was about to be represented, and that at the reading of the play by one of the actors, the players,

who listened, were moved to tears, and the reader, in his turn, was so overcome by his emotions, "that he was frequently obliged to lay down the book, and pause, to recover himself and give vent to the humanity which rose in him at some irresistible touches of the imagined sorrow." On the first night of its being played, the performance was said to be "at the desire of several ladies of quality." Turgid as the style of this adaptation now seems,—to Addison, its simplicity was its great merit. "Why!" says Sir Roger, "there is not a single sentence in the play that I don't know the meaning of!" The epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, and undoing all the soft emotions wrought by the tragedy, was repeated twice, for several nights. The audience could not have enough of it, and long years after, they called for it, whenever the piece was revived. Ambrose Philips, by this play, took higher rank among the wits at Button's Coffee House, and had no reason to fear the ridicule of men like Henry Carey, who fastened upon him the name of *Namby Pamby*. Success made the author pompous. He wore a sword (although his foes called him Quaker Philips); but the story of his having hung up a rod at Button's, and threatened Pope with a degrading application of it, for expressing contempt of his Pastorals, is not true. Pope says, in 1714, "Mr. Philips did express himself with much indignation against me one evening at Button's Coffee House (as I was told), saying that I had entered into a cabal with Dean Swift and others to write against the Whig interest, and in particular to undermine his own reputation; but Mr. Philips never opened his lips to my face on this or any like occasion, tho' I was almost every night in the same room with him, nor ever offered me any indecorum."

At the close of this season Estcourt retired. "This man," says Cibber, in his *Apology*, "was so amazing and extraordinary a mimic, that no man or woman, from the coquette to the privy-counsellor, ever moved or spoke before him, but he could carry their voice, look, mien, and motion, instantly into another company. . . . I have seen upon the margin of the written part of Falstaff, which he acted, his own notes and observations upon almost every speech of it, describing the true spirit of the humour, and with what tone of voice, with what look or gesture, each of them ought to be delivered. Yet in his execution upon the stage, he seemed to have lost all those just ideas he had formed of it, and almost through the character he laboured under a heavy load of flatness." It was probably his spirit of good fellowship which induced him to leave the stage for another calling, which the

Spectator notices with a fine bit of raillery:—"Estcourt has lain in, at the Bumper, Covent Garden, neat, natural wines, to be sold wholesale, as well as retail, by his old servant, trusty Anthony (Aston). As Estcourt is a person altogether unknowing in the wine trade, it cannot but be doubted that he will deliver the wine in the same natural purity that he receives it from the merchants, &c." On the foundation of the "Beef Steak Club," Estcourt was appointed *Providore;* and in the exercise of this office to the chief wits and leading men of the nation, he wore a small gold gridiron, suspended round his neck by a green silk ribband. Estcourt died in 1712, and was buried in the "yard" of St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

Romantic drama, light, bustling comedy, with less vice and not much less wit than of old, and the severest classical tragedy, challenged the favour of the town in the Drury Lane season of 1712-13. Severe tragedy won the wreath from its competitors. The pieces by Johnson, Dennis, Taverner,—even the "Wife of Bath," written by a young man named Gay, who had been a mercer's apprentice in the Strand, but who was now house-steward to the widowed Duchess of Monmouth,—were all unheeded. The sole success of the season was Addison's "Cato," first played on the 14th of April, 1713; thus cast: Cato, Booth; Syphax, Cibber; Juba, Wilks; Portius, Powell; Sempronius, Mills; Marcus, Ryan; Decius, Bowman; Lucius, Keen; Marcia, Mrs. Oldfield; Lucia, Mrs. Porter. Of the success of this tragedy, a compound of transcendent beauties and absurdity, I shall speak, when treating of Booth, apart It established that actor as the great master of his art, and it brought into notice young Ryan, the intelligent son of an Irish tailor, a good actor, and a true gentleman. "Cato" had the good fortune to be represented by superior actors, who had been enlightened by the instruction of Addison, and stimulated, at rehearsals, by the sarcasm of Swift.

In the season of 1713-14, the old pieces were admirably cast; of two new pieces, which have been played with success from that time down to the last year, some notice is required. I allude to Rowe's "Jane Shore," and Mrs. Centlivre's "Wonder" The tragedy was written after the poet had ceased to be Under-Secretary to the Duke of Queensberry. "Jane Shore" was brought out February 2, 1714 Hastings, Booth; Dumont, Wilks; Glo'ster, Cibber; Jane Shore, Mrs. Oldfield; Alicia, Mrs. Porter. In this domestic tragedy all the unities are violated, the language is familiar, and the chief incidents are the starving of a repentant wife, and the generosity of an exceedingly forgiving husband.

The audience, which was stirred by the patriotism of "Cato," was moved to delicious tears by the sufferings of Jane Shore, whose character Rowe has elevated in order to secure for her the suffrages of his hearers. The character was a triumph for Mrs. Oldfield; she had been trained to a beautiful reading of her part by Rowe himself, who was unequalled as a reader by any poet save Lee; and "Jane Shore," as a success, ranked only next to "Cato" The third, sixth, and tenth nights were for the author's benefit. Much expectation had been raised by this piece, and it was realized to the utmost. It was otherwise with the "Wonder," from which little was expected, but much success ensued. The Violante of Mrs. Oldfield and the Don Felix of Wilks were talked of in every coffee-house.

At this period the stage lost Mrs. Bradshaw. Her departure was caused by marriage; and the gentleman who carried her off was a staid antiquary, Martin Folkes. The lady had been on the stage eighteen years, with unblemished reputation. She had her reward in an excellent husband; and the happiness of this couple was well established. With the death of Queen Anne, the patent held by Wilks, Cibber, Booth and Doggett, died also. In the new licence, Steele, who, since we last met with him had endured variety of fortune, was made a partner. He had married that second wife whom he treated so politely in his little failures of allegiance. He had established the *Tatler*, co-operated in the *Spectator*, had begun and terminated the *Guardian*, and had started the *Englishman*. He had served the Duke of Marlborough in and out of office, and had been elected M.P. for Stockbridge, after nobly resigning his Commissionership of Stamps, and his pension as "servant to the late Prince George of Denmark." He had been expelled the House for writing what the House called seditious pamphlets, and had then returned to literature, and now to occupation as a manager. From the new government, under the new King, by whom he was soon after knighted, Steele had influence enough to ultimately obtain a *patent*, in the names of himself, Booth, Wilks and Cibber, which protected them from some small tyrannies with which they were visited by officials in the Lord Chamberlain's office.

The season of 1714-15 was remarkable for the production of Rowe's "Lady Jane Grey" (Dudley, Booth; Lady Jane, Mrs. Oldfield). Pope says of Mrs. Oldfield's Lady Jane, that she personated a character directly opposite to female nature; for what woman ever despised sovereignty?"

Rowe's "Lady Jane" did not prove so attractive as "Jan

Shore." There were only innocence and calamity wherewith to move the audience; no guilt: no profound intrigue. But there is much force in some of the scenes. The variety of the latter, indeed, was called a defect, by slaves of the unity of time and place. It was objected to Rowe, that in his violation of the unities he went beyond other offenders,—not only changing the scene with the acts, but varying it within the acts. For this, however, he had good authority in older and better dramatists. Rowe's Jane Grey interests the heart more fully than Jane Shore or Calista; but the last two ladies have a touch of boldness about them, in which the first, from her very innocence, is wanting; and audiences are, therefore, more excited by the loudly-proclaimed wrongs of the women who have gone astray than by the tender protests of the victim who suffers for the crimes of others.

Gay, who had returned from Hanover with the third Earl of Clarendon, whose secretary he had become, after leaving the service of the Duchess of Monmouth, produced his hilarious burlesque of old and modern tragedies,—the "What d'ye call It?" The satire of this piece was so fine, that deaf gentlemen (who saw the tragic action and could not hear the words), and the new sovereign and court (who heard the words but could not understand their sense), were put into great perplexity; while the honest galleries, reached by the solemn sounds, and taking manner for matter, were affected to such tears as they could shed, at the most farcical and high-sounding similes. It was only after awhile that the joke was comprehended, and that the "What d'ye call It?" was seen to be a capital burlesque of "Venice Preserved." "The Court, in general," writes Pope to Congreve, "had in a very particular manner come into the jest; and the three first nights, notwithstanding two of them were court nights, were distinguished by very full audiences of the first quality."

All attempts to persuade Pope this year to write a tragedy, failed. He wrote playfully, in reference to the subject, to Cromwell, December 11, 1711,—"I'll e'en compose my own tragedy, and the poet shall appear in his own person, to move compassion. 'Twill be far more effectual than Bayes's entering with a rope about his neck, and the world will own there never was a more miserable object brought upon the stage."

CHAPTER XV.

COMPETITION, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

George I. restored the Letters Patent of Charles II. to Christopher Rich, of which the latter had been deprived, and under them his son, John, opened the revived theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, on the the 18th December, 1714, with the "Recruiting Officer." The enlarged stage was "superbly adorned with looking-glasses on both sides;" a circumstance which, Quin says, "was an excellent trap to such actresses who admired their own persons more than they attended to the duties of their profession." Some good actors left Drury for the Fields.

At neither theatre was any novelty of mark produced till Drury challenged the public with the "Drummer, or the Haunted House," first played in March, 1716, and not known to be Addison's till Steele published the fact, after the author's death. Tonson gave £50 for the copyright. Wilks, Cibber, Mills and Mrs. Oldfield, could not secure a triumph for this play, in which there is a novel mixture of sentiment, caricature and farcical incident. Warton describes it as "a just picture of life and real manners; where the poet never speaks in his own person, or totally drops or forgets a character, for the sake of introducing a brilliant simile or acute remark; where no train is laid for wit, no Jeremys or Bens are suffered to appear."

In the 12mo edition, edited by Tickell, 1726, the preface to the "Drummer," written by Steele, says that the author altered his comedy, at Steele's suggestion, that it was all the better for the want of the studied similes and repartees, which showed the false taste of those who indulged in them; that "the scenes were drawn after Molière's manner, and that an easy and natural vein of humour ran through the whole." Steele and his partners thought "the touches were too delicate for every taste in a popu-

lar assembly." The approbation was at first doubtful; "but 'it has' risen," says Steele, "every time it has been acted." The prologue claimed patronage for it as a novelty, "in this grave age when comedies are few," and the epilogue, spoken by Mrs. Oldfield, asked favour for it, on the ground of its morality, and the support it gave to the dignity of honest married life. The address had its usual fling at the audience:—

> "When we would raise your mirth, you hardly know
> Whether, in strictness, you should laugh or no;
> But turn upon the ladies in the pit,
> And, if they redden, you are sure 't is wit."

Bullock, Johnson, Hill, Theobald, and Mrs. Davys, were the play-wrights at Lincoln's Inn, but without success. During the Drury Lane season of 1716-17, the most notable affair was the comedy, "Three Hours after Marriage," in which Gay, Pope, and Arbuthnot, three grave men, who pretended to instruct and improve mankind, insulted modesty, virtue, and common decency, in the grossest way, by speech or inuendo. There is not so much filth in any other comedy of this century, and the trio of authors stand stigmatised for their attempt to bring in the old corruption. But while moral poets were polluting the stage, and immoral women (like Mrs. Manley, in "Lucius,") undertaking to purify it, a reverend Archdeacon of Stowe, the historian, Lawrence Echard, in conjunction with Lestrange, put on the stage of Drury Lane, a translation of the "Eunuchus" of Terence. It did not survive the third night. In this season I find this first trace of a "fashionable night:"—"18 June, 1717. By particular desire of several Ladies of Quality. 'Fatal Marriage.' Biron, Booth; Villeroy, Mills; Isabella, Mrs. Porter; Victoria, Mrs. Younger. An exact computation being made of the number which the Pit and Boxes will hold, they are laid together; and no person can be admitted without tickets. By desire, the play is not to begin till nine o'clock, by reason of the heat of the weather—nor the house to be opened till eight."

In the corresponding season (1716-17) at Lincoln's Inn, Rich, who had failed in attempting Essex, played, as "Mr. Lun," Harlequin, in the "Cheats, or the Tavern Bilkers," a ballet-pantomime—the forerunner of the line of pantomime, which still has its admirers. In novely, Leveridge, the singer, produced the burlesque of "Pyramus and Thisbe"—those parts being played by himself and Pack, with irresistible comic effect, especially when caricaturing the style of the Italian Opera, where your hero died

in very good time and tune. The "Artful Husband," by Taverner, brought into notice a young actor who had but a small part to play,—*Stockwell*. His name was Spiller. The Duke of Argyle had spoken well of him before this. On the first night, Spiller, who dressed his characters like an artist, (he had begun life as a landscape-painter) went through his early scenes exquisitely, and without being recognised by his ducal patron, who was behind the scenes. Later, Riccoboni saw the young actor play an old man with a perfectness not to be expected but from players of the longest experience. "How great was my surprise," says Riccoboni, "when I learnt that he was a young man, about the age of twenty-six. I could not believe it; but owned that it might be possible, had he only used a broken and a trembling voice, and had only an extreme weakness possessed his body, because I conceived that a young actor might, by the help of art, imitate that debility of nature to such a pitch of excellence; but the wrinkles of his face, his sunk eyes, and his loose yellow cheeks, the most certain marks of age, were incontestible proofs against what they said to me. Notwithstanding all this, I was forced to submit to truth, because I was credibly informed that the actor, to fit himself for the part of this old man, spent an hour in dressing himself, and disguised his face so nicely, and painted so artificially a part of his eyebrows and eyelids, that at the distance of six paces it was impossible not to be deceived."

In the next season, at Drury (1717-18), the only remarkable piece produced was Cibber's adaptation of "Tartuffe," under the name of the "Nonjuror." In the lustre of the "Nonjuror" paled and died out the first play by Savage, "Love in a Veil." The "Nonjuror" alone survives as a memorial of the Drury season of 1717-18. We owe the piece to fear and hatred of the Pope and the Pretender. Lintot gave the liberal sum of a hundred guineas for the copyright, and the King gave a dedication fee of twice that number of guineas to the author, who addressed him as "dread Sir," and spoke of himself as "the lowest of your subjects from the theatre." Cibber adds, "Your comedians, Sir, are an unhappy society, whom some severe heads think wholly useless, and others, dangerous to the young and innocent. This comedy is, therefore, an attempt to remove that prejudice, and to show what honest and laudable uses may be made of the theatre, when its performances keep close to the true purposes of its institution."

The play was admirably acted by Booth, Colonel Woodvil; Mills, Sir John; Wilks, Heartley; Cibber, Dr. Wolf (the Cantwell of the modern arrangement); and Walker (soon to be famous as Captain Macheath), Charles. Mrs. Porter played Lady Woodvil, and Mrs. Oldfield turned the heads and touched the hearts of all susceptible folks by her exquisite coquetry, in Maria. The play was an excellent adaptation to, modern circumstances of, the "Tartuffe." Thoroughly English, it abounds with the humour and manner of Cibber, and despite some offences against taste, it was at this time the purest comedy on the stage. There was farce enough for the gallery; maxim and repartee, suggestions and didactic phrases for the rest of the house. The success raised against Cibber a phalanx of foes who howled at everything of which he was, afterwards, the author; but it gained for him his advancement to the poet-laureateship, and an estimation which caused some people to place him, for usefulness to the cause of true religion, on an equality with the author of "The Whole Duty of Man!" "The stage," writes Pope, "is the only place we seem alive at; there, indeed, we stare and roar, and clap hands for King George and the Government." He cites Lady Scudamore as a lady of strong sense, who "talks without any shame of good books, and has not seen Cibber's play of the "Nonjuror." *Mist's Journal*, for fifteen years, lost no opportunity of mauling the detested author. "Soon after the 'Nonjuror' had received the favour of the town," says Cibber, "I read in one of his journals the following short paragraph:—'Yesterday died Mr. Colley Cibber, late comedian of the Theatre Royal, notorious for writing the *Nonjuror*.' The compliment, in the latter part, I confess," adds Cibber, "I did not dislike, because it came from so impartial a judge."

Quin passed over to Lincoln's Inn Fields in this season of 1717-18, where he played Hotspur, Tamerlane, Morat ("Aurungzebe"), Mark Antony, and created the part of Scipio, in the "Scipio Africanus," written by young Beckingham, the pride of Merchant Tailors' School, and of Fleet Street, where his father was a linen-draper. The author was then but nineteen years of age. A tragedy by one so young excited the public, and most especially the juvenile public, at Merchant Tailors', where Dr. Smith was head-master. The Doctor and sub-masters held the stage in abhorrence till now, when a brilliant *alumnus* was likely to shed lustre on the corporation of "Merchant Tailors'." They gave the lads a half-holiday on the author's night, and joyfully

saw the whole school swarming to the pit of Lincoln's Inn, to uphold the tragedy by this honoured *condiscipulus*. Beckingham's tragedy exhibits a romantic story, in a classical costume. There is severity enough to gratify rigid tastes, with a little of over-warmth of action on the part of one of three lovers, which shows that the young poet was not unread in the older masters. The piece of this season which had "stuff" in it, was Mrs. Centlivre's "Bold Stroke for a Wife," of which I have already spoken. All the rest belong to the realms of Nonsense. At Drury Lane, the great effort of the season was made in bringing out "Busiris," a tragedy, by the Rev. Dr. Young, author of *Night Thoughts*. "Busiris" was Young's earliest tragedy. It is stilted and inflated, and bears the marks of a juvenile production. The plot is void of ingenuity; but there is little that is borrowed in it, save the haughty message sent by Busiris to the Persian Ambassador, which is the same as that returned by the Ethiopian prince to Cambyses, in the third book of Herodotus. Of the phrasing, and incidents of this tragedy, Fielding made excellent fun, in his "Tom Thumb." The concluding incident of this play,—the double suicide of Memnon (Wilks) and Mandane (Mrs. Oldfield), found such favour in the author's own estimation, that he repeated it in his next two tragedies, in each of which a couple of lovers make away with themselves. This tripled circumstance reminds a critic of the remark of Dryden:—"The dagger and the bowl are always at hand to butcher a hero, when a poet wants the brains to save him." Dr. Young was at this time thirty-eight years of age, but was not yet "famous." Born when Charles II. was king and Dryden laureat, the Hampshire godson of the Princess, Anne, was as yet only known as having been the friend of the Duke of Wharton, and of Tickell; as having first come before the public in 1713, with a poem to Granville, in which there is good dramatic criticism; and of having since written poems of promise rather than of merit, the latest of which was a paraphrase on part of the book of Job, which, curiously enough, abounds with phrases which show the author's growing intercourse with the play house and theatrical people.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROGRESS OF JAMES QUIN, AND DECLINE OF BARTON BOOTH.

Quin made great advances in public favour in the season of 1718-19, at Lincoln's Inn. Southwark Fair, a fashionable resort, contributed to the company a new actor, Boheme; and Susan Mountfort replaced Mrs. Rogers, who had held for a time the tragic parts once acted by Mrs. Barry and Bracegirdle, and who died about this time. During this season a French company acted for some time in the Fields, where the "Tartuffe" was also played against the "Nonjuror." The only novelty worthy of notice was the "Sir Walter Raleigh" of Dr. Sewell, in which Quin played the hero.

In the Drury Lane season of 1719-20, Dennis's "Invader of His Country," and Southerne's "Spartan Dame," were produced. The former was an adaptation from Shakspeare's "Coriolanus." Tate fancied there was something in the times like that depicted in the days of Coriolanus. The failure was complete; although Booth played the principal male character, and Mrs. Porter Volumnia. Southerne's "Spartan Dame" had been interdicted in the reign of William and Mary, as it was supposed that the part of Celonis (Mrs. Oldfield), wavering between her duty to her father, Leonidas, and that owing to her husband, Cleombrotus (Booth), would remind the spectators of the position of Mary, between her royal sire and her princely consort. Southerne's play has no local colour about it, but abounds in anachronisms and incongruities. The author gained £500 by his "author's nights" alone; for patronage and presence on which occasions, the plausible poet personally solicited his friends. For the copyright he received an additional £120. About six weeks after Southerne's

play was produced, an order from the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Chamberlain, suddenly closed the theatre! The alleged cause was "*information* of misbehaviour on the part of the players." The real cause lay in Sir Richard Steele, the principal man who held the patent! Since we last parted with the knight, he had been ungenerously trying, in pamphlets, to hunt to the scaffold the last Tory ministers of Queen Anne; he had lost his second wife; he had been projecting an union of Church and Kirk; he had invented a means of keeping fish alive while being transported across sea; he had been living extravagantly; but he had also offended his patron, the Duke of Newcastle, and the Government, of which the Duke was a member. Steele had opposed, by speech and pamphlet, Lord Sunderland's Peerage Bill, which proposed to establish twenty-five hereditary peers of Scotland to sit in the English House of Lords, in place of the usual election of sixteen; and to create six new English peerages, with the understanding that the Crown would never, in future, make a new peer except on the extinction of an old family. Steele denounced, in the *Plebeian*, the aristocratical tendency of the bill, and to such purpose, that the theatre he governed was closed, and his name struck out of the licence! He appealed to the public in a pamphlet, the *Theatre;* and showed how he had been wronged; he estimated his loss at £10,000, and finally sank into distress, with mingled bitterness and wit. His old ducal patron had loudly proclaimed he would ruin him. "This," said Steele, "from a man in his circumstances, to one in mine, is as great as the humour of Malagina, in the comedy, who valued himself for his activity in 'tripping up cripples.'" Booth, Cibber and Wilks, were permitted to reopen Drury under a licence, after an interval of a few days, and the season recommenced on the 28th of January, with the "Careless Husband," Cibber playing Lord Foppington. The only novelty was Hughes's "Siege of Damascus," with false quantities in its classical names, and much heaviness of treatment of an apt story. It was Hughes's first play, and he died unconscious of its success. He was then but forty-three years of age. The old school-fellow of Isaac Watts had begun his career by complimenting King William and eulogising Queen Anne. He had published clever translations, composed very gentlemanlike music, contributed to the *Spectator*, and obtained a place among the wits. He wrote, in 1712, the words of the opera of "Calypso and Telemachus," to prove how gracefully the English language might be wedded to music. Two Lord Chancellors were among his patrons, Cowper and Maccles-

field, and that he held the Secretaryship to the Commissioners of the Peace was a pleasant consequence thereof. His "Siege of Damascus" has for moral, that it is wrong to extend religious faith by means of the sword. The angry Christian lover who left the city he had saved, to assault it with the Arabians from whom he had saved it, and to meet the lady of his love full of abhorrence for the traitor, might have produced some emotion; but loving, loved, living, and dying, they all talk, seldom act, and never touch. Hughes acquired no fame by it. When Swift received a copy of his works, he wrote to Pope:—"He is too grave a poet for me, and, I think, among the mediocrists in prose as well as in verse."

While at Lincoln's Inn, with Quin for leading actor, young Beckingham, handsome Leigh, Theobald, Griffin, and Mottley, produced pieces, the very names of which are forgotten by play-readers, Young's "Revenge" was the partially-successful piece of the Drury Lane season of 1720-21. Zanga was played by Mills, while Booth took Alonzo, and Wilks, Carlos. The secondary parts were thus played by the better actors. Mrs. Porter was the Leonora, Mrs. Horton, Isabella. The piece was moderately-successful. A story in the *Guardian*, and two plays, by Marlowe and Aphra Behn, furnished Young with his materials, in handling which, one of his biographers has described him as "superior even to Shakspeare!" The action does not flag, the situations are dramatic, the interest is well sustained, and the language is expressive and abounding in poetical beauty. The story of love, jealousy, and murder is, however, a little marred by the puling lines of the black Iago,—Zanga,—at the close. Young obtained but £50 for the copyright of this piece. Cibber's comedy, the "Refusal," ran, like the tragedy, but six nights. The other incident of the season is confined to the appearance of Cibber's son, Theophilus, who made his first essay in the Duke of Clarence, in the second part of "Henry IV.," as arranged by Betterton.

Lincoln's Inn was, at least, active in its corresponding season, which was remarkable for the progress of Quin, for Shakspearean revivals, creditable to Rich, and for the failure of the original pieces produced by Odell, by Mrs. Heywood, and by Mottley. Indeed, the poets drew blanks at both houses, till the Drury Lane actors, in November, 1723, produced Steele's "Conscious Lovers," in which Booth played Young Bevil, and Mrs. Oldfield, Indiana. There was not an inferior performer in any of the other parts of this comedy, which Fielding sneers at, by

making Parson Adams declare that there were things in it that would do very well in a sermon! Modern critics have called this comedy dull, but decent. It is excessively indecent. There is nothing worse in Aphra Behn than the remarks made by Cimberton, the "coxcomb with reflection," on Lucinda. There is more pathos than humour in this comedy; (the author of which had recovered his share in the patent, by favour of Sir Robert Walpole). The story of the piece is admirably manipulated and reformed from the "Andria," of Terence, though Tom (Cibber) is but a sorry Davus. On one night of the performance of this play, a general officer was observed in the boxes, weeping at the distresses of Indiana. The circumstance was noted to Wilks, who, with kindly feeling ever ready, remarked, "I am certain the officer will fight none the worse for it!" Steele must have had more than ordinary power, if he could draw tears from martial eyes in those days.

Ambrose Philips's tragedy, "Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester," was produced in this season. It was the last and worst of Philips's three dramatic essays. The public would not accept this cold, declamatory, conversational play. Pope ridiculed George's reign, "when Ambrose Philips was preferred for wit." "He is of all poets the most miserable," writes Pope to Swift, who answers from Dublin, in 1725, before Ambrose had obtained preferment from Archbishop Boulter, or Wharton, "P. is *fort chancelant* whether he shall turn parson or no . . . . Cast wits and cast beaux have a proper sanctuary in the church, yet we think it a severe judgment that a fine gentleman, and so much the finer for hating ecclesiastics, should be a domestic humble retainer to an Irish prelate." Then came Savage's tragedy, "Sir Thomas Overbury," in which the author played, indifferently, the hero. At this time, the hapless young man was not widely known, except to those friends on whose charity he lived while he abused it. Favoured by Wilks and patronised by Theophilus Cibber, the ragged, rakish fellow, slunk at nights into the theatre, and by day lounged where he could, composing his tragedy on scraps of paper. In producing it, ever ready Aaron Hill assisted him; and his profits, amounting to about £200, gave him a temporary appearance of respectability. Savage is said to have been deeply ashamed of having turned actor; but he was only ashamed of having failed. He had neither voice, figure, nor any other qualification for such a profession. The tragedy lived but three days. There is something adroit in the conduct of the

plot, and evidence of correctness of conjecture as to the truth of the relations between Overbury and Lady Somerset,—but there was no vitality therewith; and the poet gained no lasting fame by the effort.

Against Drury, the house in the Fields long struggled in vain. Audiences, of five or six pounds in value, discouraged the actors. But they recovered their spirits in the success of Fenton's "Mariamne," which had been declined by Cibber. Fenton's Jacobite principles had been an obstacle to his ordination. He had been secretary and tutor in the family of Lord Orrery, and had also earned his bread in the capacity of usher in a boarding school. Colley read "Mariamne," and returned it, with the advice that Fenton should stick to some honest calling, and cease to woo the Muses. Elijah Fenton, however, took "Mariamne" to Rich, who immediately brought it out, with Quin as Sohemus, Boheme as Herod, and Mrs. Seymour as Mariamne—her one, great creation. The old story of Herod and Mariamne is so simple and natural, that it appeals to every heart. Fenton perilled it by additions; but the tragedy won a triumph, and the poet to whom Pope paid about £250 for translating four books of the *Odyssey* for him, netted four times that sum by this drama. His critics did not note the false quantity which the Cambridge man gave to the penultimate of Salome. Aaron Hill brought out, in the season of 1723-4, at Drury Lane, his tragedy of "Henry V."—an "improvement" on Shakspeare. Gay, (the ex-mercer was now a poet, whom the "quality" petted); produced his "Captives," but it failed. The public preferred the pantomime of the "Necromancers," and Rich, at Lincoln's Inn, improved on this by bringing out "The Necromancer, or the History of Dr. Faustus." The splendour of the scenes, the vastness of the machinery, and the grace and ability of Rich himself, raised harlequinade above Shakspeare. During the nights of its attraction the prices of admission were raised by one-fourth, and the weekly receipts advanced to a thousand pounds. The advanced price displeased the public, with whom ultimately a compromise was made, and a portion returned to those who chose to leave the house before the pantomime commenced.

The little theatre in the Haymarket opened its doors for the first time on the 12th of September, 1723, with the "French Fop," by Sandford. The theatre was only open for a few nights.

In the season 1724-5, at Drury Lane, Wilks returned to Sir Harry Wildair, and the public laughed at Cibber's quavering

tragedy tones. In "Cæsar in Egypt," Antony and Cleopatra were played by Wilks and Mrs. Oldfield, who were never more happy than when making love on the stage.

In the Fields, the chief novelty most relied on was Rich's "Harlequin Sorcerer." The "Bath Unmasked" was the only original comedy produced. It described Bath as made up of very unprincipled people, with a good lord to about a score of knaves and hussies. It was the first and not lucky essay of miserable Gabriel Odingsell, who, nine years later, in a fit of madness, hung himself in his house, Thatched Court, Westminster.

In the Drury Lane season of 1725-26, amid a succession of old dramas, one novelty was offered, a translation of the "Hecuba" of Euripides The author was Richard West, son-in-law of Bishop Burnet. It did not succeed, wrote the author, "because *it was not heard.* A rout of Vandals in the galleries intimidated the young actresses, disturbed the audience, and prevented all attention; and, I believe, if the verses had been repeated in the original Greek, they would have been understood and received in the same manner."

In several succeeding seasons the playwrights fell from bad to worse, till the "Provoked Husband" was submitted to the town. The unsuccessful novelties were, the "Capricious Lovers," by Odingsell, with "Money's the Mistress," the last of Southerne; the "Rival Modes," by Moore Smythe; the "Dissembled Wanton," by Leonard Welsted (two authors pilloried by Pope); Philip Frowde's "Fall of Saguntum;" and "Philip of Macedon," by David Lewis. With Booth's failing health, and the ill-success of these novelties, there was a gloom over theatrical matters. But at this very time a sun was rising from behind the cloud. In one of the irregular series of performances, held at the little theatre in the Haymarket, in 1726, there appeared a young lady, in the part of Monimia, in the "Orphan," and subsequently as Cherry, in the "Beaux' Stratagem." She was pretty, clever, and eighteen; but she was not destined to become either the tragic or the comic queen. She was known as Lavinia Fenton, but she was the daughter of a naval lieutenant, named Beswick. Her widowed mother had married a coffee-house keeper in Charing Cross, whose name of Fenton was assumed by his step-daughter. Before we shall hear of her at Lincoln's Inn Fields, a lieutenant will be offering her everything he possessed, except his name; but Lavinia, without being as discreet, was even more successful than Pamela, and died a duchess.

The season of 1727-8 was the last season of Booth. That admirable actor was compelled, by shattered health, to withdraw. On the 9th of January, Booth, after a severe struggle, played, for the sixth and last time, Julio, in the "Double Falsehood;" a play, ascribed to Shakspeare: but which was chiefly Theobald's own, founded on a manuscript copy which, through Downes, the prompter, had descended to him from Betterton; and which served Colman, who certainly derived his Octavian from Julio. The loss in Booth was, in some degree, supplied by the "profit" arising from a month's run of a new comedy by Vanbrugh and Cibber,—the "Provoked Husband;" in which the Lord and Lady Townly were played by those incomparable lovers, Wilks and Mrs. Oldfield. Cibber acted Sir Francis Wronghead. The enemies of Cibber hissed all the scenes of which they supposed him to be the author; and applauded those which they were sure were by Vanbrugh. Cibber published the imperfect play left by Sir John, and thereby showed that his adversaries condemned and approved exactly in the wrong places. He enjoyed another triumph this season. Steele, abandoning the responsibilities of management, to follow his pleasure, had submitted to a deduction of £1 13*s.* 4*d*, nightly, to each of his partners, for performing his duties. Steele was at this time in Wales, dying, though he survived till September, 1729. His creditors, meanwhile, claimed the "five marks" as their own, and the case went into the Rolls Court, before Sir Joseph Jekyll. Cibber pleaded in person the cause of himself and active partners, and so convincingly, that he obtained a decree in their favour. In presence of this new audience, the old actor confesses he felt fear.

This, the "Beggars' Opera" season at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was the most profitable ever known there. Swift's idea of a Newgate pastoral was adopted by Gay, who, smarting under disappointment of preferment at court, and angry at the offer to make him gentleman-usher to the youngest of the royal children, indulged his satirical humour against ministers and placemen, by writing a Newgate comedy, at which Swift and Pope shook their heads, and old Congreve, for one of whose three sinecures Gay would have given his ears, was sorely perplexed as to whether it would bring triumph or calamity to its author. The songs were added, but Cibber, as doubtful as Congreve, declined what Rich eagerly accepted, and the success of which was first discerned by the Duke of Argyle, from his box on the stage, who looked at the house, and "saw it in the eyes of them." Walker, who had been

playing tragic parts, and very recently Macbeth, was chosen for Macheath, on Quin declining the highwayman! Lavinia Fenton was the Polly. Walker "knew no more of music than barely singing in tune; but then his singing was supported by his inimitable action, by his speaking to the eye and charming the ear." It was at the close of a long run of the piece that Walker once tripped in his words. "I wonder," said Rich, "that you should forget the words of a part you have played so often!" "Do you think," asked Walker, with happy equivocation, "that a man's memory is to last for ever?" Sixty-two nights the "Beggars' Opera" drew crowded houses. Highwaymen grew fashionable, and ladies not only carried fans adorned with subjects from the opera, but sang the lighter, and hummed the coarser, songs. Sir Robert Walpole, who was present on the first night, finding the eyes of the audience turned on him, as Lockit was singing his song touching courtiers and bribes, was the first to blunt the point of the satire, by calling *encore*. Swift says, "*two* great ministers were in a box together, and all the world staring at them." At this time it was said that the quarrel of Peachem and Lockit was an imitation of that of Brutus and Cassius, but the public discerned therein Walpole and his great adversary, Townshend. "The Beggars' Opera" hath knocked down *Gulliver*, wrote Swift to Gay. "I hope to see Pope's 'Dulness,' (the first name of the *Dunciad*) knock down the 'Beggars' Opera,' but not till it hath fully done its job." But Gay had no "mission;" he only sought to gratify himself and the town; to satirise, not to teach or to warn; the "opera" made "Gay rich and Rich gay." Gay's author's nights realised a gain to him of £700, and enabled him to dress in "silver and blue." At the end of the season, Lavinia Fenton, after two benefits, announced as "Polly's" nights, was taken off the stage by the Duke of Bolton. On his wife's death he made a duchess of "Polly." Warton testifies to Polly's wit, good manners, taste and intelligence:—"Her conversation was admired by the first characters of the age, particularly the old Lord Bathurst and Lord Granville."

CHAPTER XVII.

BARTON BOOTH.

At this period it was evident that the stage was about to lose its greatest tragedian since the death of Bettorton. Booth was stricken past recovery, and all the mirth caused by the "Beggars' Opera" could not make his own peculiar public forget him. Scarcely eight and thirty years had elapsed since the time when, in 1690, a handsome, well-bred lad, whose age did not then amount to two lustres, sought admission into Westminster School. Dr. Busby thought him too young; but Barton Booth was the son of a gentleman, of the family of Booth, Earl of Warrington, and was a remarkably clever and attractive boy. The Doctor, whose acting had been commended by Charles I., perhaps thought of the school-plays, and recognised in little Barton the promise of a lover in Terence's comedies. At all events, he admitted the applicant.

Barton Booth, a younger son of a Lancashire sire, was destined for Holy Orders. He was a fine elocutionist, and he took to Latin as readily as Erasmus; but then he had Nicholas Rowe for a school-fellow; and, one day, was cast for Pamphilus in the "Andria." Luckily, or unluckily, he played this prototype of young Bevil in Steele's "Conscious Lovers" with such ease, perfection, and charming intelligence, that the old dormitory shook with plaudits. The shouts of approbation changed the whole purpose of his sire; they deprived the church of a graceful clergyman, and gave to the stage one of the most celebrated of our actors.

He was but seventeen, when his brilliant folly led him to run away from home, and tempt fortune, by playing Oronooko, in Dublin. The Irish audiences confirmed the judgment of the Westminster critics, and the intelligent lad moved the hands of

the men and the hearts of the women, without a check, during a glorious three years of probation. And yet he narrowly escaped failure, through a ridiculous accident, when in 1698, he made his *debut* as Oronooko. It was a sultry night, in June. While waiting to go on, before his last scene, he inadvertently wiped his darkened face, and the lamp-black thereon came off in streaks. On entering on the stage, unconscious of the countenance he presented, he was saluted with a roar of laughter, and became much confused. The generous laughers then sustained him by loud applause. But Booth was disturbed by this accident, and to obviate its repetition, he went on, the next night, in a crape mask, made by an actress to fit close to his face. Unfortunately, in the first scene the mask slipped, and the new audience were as hilarious as the old. "I looked like a magpie," said Barton; "but they lamp-blacked me for the rest of the night, and I was flayed before I could get it off again." The mishap of the first night did not affect his triumph; this was so complete that Ashbury, the "master," made him a present of five guineas; bright forerunners of the fifty that were to be placed in his hands by delighted Bolingbroke. The hitherto penniless player was now fairly on the first step of the ascent it was his to accomplish. When he subsequently passed through Lancashire to London, in 1701, his fame had gone before him; he reached the capital with his manly beauty to gain him additional favour, with a heavy purse, and a steady conviction of even better fortune to come. With such a personage, his hitherto angry kinsmen were, of course, reconciled forthwith.

One morning early in that year, 1701, he might have been seen leaving Lord Fitzharding's rooms at St. James's, with Bowman, the player, and making his way to Betterton's house in Great Russell Street. From the lord in waiting to Prince George of Denmark, he carries a letter of recommendation to the father of the stage; and generous old Thomas, jealous of no rival, depreciator of no talent, gave the stranger a hearty welcome, heard his story, asked for a taste of his quality, imparted good counsel, took him into training, and ultimately brought him out at Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1701, as Maximus, in Rochester's "Valentinian." Betterton played Ætius, and Mrs. Barry, Lucina. These two alone were enough to daunt so young an actor; but Booth was not vain enough to be too modest, and the public at once foresaw in him a new charmer. His ease, grace, fire, and the peculiar harmony of his voice, altogether distinct from that

of Betterton's, created a great impression. "Booth with the silver tongue," gained the epithet before Barry was born; and Westminster celebrated him in one of her school prologues.

At first, Booth was thought of as a promising under-graduate of the buskin, one who had faults to amend. He confessed to Cibber that "he had been for some time too frank a lover of the bottle;" but having the tipsyness of Powell ever before him as a warning, he made a resolution of maintaining a sobriety of character, from which he never departed. Cibber pronounces this to be, "an uncommon act of philosophy in a young man;" but he adds, that "in his fame and fortune he afterwards enjoyed the reward and benefit." For a few years, then, Booth had arduous work to go through, and every sort of "business" to play. The House in the Fields, too, suffered from the tumblers, dancers, and sagacious animals, added to the ordinary and well-acted plays at the House in the Lane. Leisure he had also amid all his labour, to pay successful suit to a young lady, the daughter of a Norfolk baronet, Sir William Barkham, whom he married in 1704. The lady died childless six years later. Till this last period, that, too, of the death of Betterton, Booth may be said to have been in his minority as an actor, or as Cibber puts it, "only in the promise of that reputation," which he soon after happily arrived at. Not that, when that was gained, he deemed himself perfect. The longest life, he used to say, was not long enough to enable an actor to be *perfect* in his art. Previous to 1710 he had created many new characters; among others, Dick, in the "Confederacy;" and he had played the Ghost in "Hamlet," with such extraordinary power, such a supernatural effect, so solemn, so majestic, and so affecting, that it was only second in attraction to the Dane of Betterton. But Pyrrhus and Cato were yet to come. Meanwhile, soon after his wife's death, he played Captain Worthy, in the "Fair Quaker of Deal," to the Dorcas Zeal of Miss Santlow, destined to be his second wife—but not just yet.

The two great characters created by him, between the year when he played with Miss Santlow in Charles Shadwell's comedy, and that in which he married her, were Pyrrhus, in the "Distressed Mother" (1712), and "Cato" (1713). Within the limits stated, Booth kept household with poor Susan Mountfort, the daughter of the abler actress of that name. At such arrangements society took small objection, and beyond the fact, there was nothing to carp at in Barton's home. The latter was broken

up, however—the lady being in fault,—in 1718, when Booth, who had been the faithful steward of Susan's savings, consigned to her £3,200, which were speedily squandered by her next "friend," Mr. Minshull. The hapless young creature became insane; in which condition she one night went through the part of Ophelia, with a melancholy wildness which rendered her hearers almost as distraught as herself; soon after which she died. Meanwhile, Booth achieved his two greatest triumphs. Those who have experienced the affliction of seeing or reading the "Distressed Mother," may remember that the heaviest part in that heavy play is that of Pyrrhus. But in acting it, Booth set the Orestes of Powell in the shade. "His entrance," says Victor, "his walking and mounting to the throne, his sitting down, his manner of giving audience to the ambassador, his rising from the throne, his descending and leaving the stage—though circumstances of a very common character in theatrical performances,—yet were executed by him with a grandeur not to be described."

But it is with "Cato" that Booth is identified. Fortunate it was for him that the play Addison had kept so long in his desk was not printed, according to Pope's advice, for readers only. Fortunate, too, was the actor in the political coincidences of the time. Marlborough, now a Whig, had asked to be appointed "commander in chief for life." Harley, Bolingbroke, and the other Tories, described this as an attempt to establish a perpetual dictatorship. The action and the sentiment of "Cato" are antagonistic to such an attempt, and the play had a present political, as well as a great dramatic interest. Common consent gave the part of the philosopher of Utica to Booth; Addison named young Ryan for Marcus; and Wilks, Cibber, and Mrs. Oldfield filled the other principal parts. Addison surrendered all claim to profit, and on the evening of April 14th, 1713, there was excitement and expectation on both sides of the curtain.

Booth really surpassed himself; his dignity, pathos, energy, were all worthy of Betterton, and yet were in nowise after the old actor's manner. The latter was forgotten on this night, and Booth occupied exclusively the eye, ear and heart. The public judgment answered to the public feeling. The Tories applauded every line in favour of popular liberty, and the Whigs sent forth responsive peals to show that they, too, were advocates of popular freedom, "while the author," writes Pope to Trumbull, "sweated behind the scenes with concern, to find their applause proceeding

more from the hand than the head." The pit was in a whirlwind of delicious agitation, and the Tory occupants of the boxes were so affected by the acting of Booth, that Bolingbroke, when the play was over, sent for the now greatest actor of the day, and presented him with a purse containing fifty guineas, the contributions of gentlemen who had experienced the greatest delight at the energy with which he had resisted a perpetual dictatorship, and maintained the cause of public liberty! "The Whigs," writes Pope, "are unwilling to be distanced this way, and therefore design a present to the same Cato, very speedily. In the meantime, they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former, on their side. So betwixt them 'tis probable that Cato (as Dr. Garth expressed it) may have something to live upon, after he dies." The managers, too, paid the actor a pecuniary compliment, and for five-and-thirty consecutive nights "Cato" filled Drury Lane, and swelled the triumph of Barton Booth. There was no longer anything sad in the old exclamation of Steele,—"Ye gods! what a part would Betterton make of Cato!" The managers, Wilks, Cibber and Doggett, were satisfied as the public, for the share of profit to each at the end of this eventful season, amounted to £1,350!

When Booth and his fellow-actors, after the close of the London season, went to Oxford, to play "Cato," before a learned and critical audience, "our house (says Cibber) was in a manner invested, and entrance demanded by twelve o'clock at noon, and, before one, it was not wide enough for many who came too late for places. The same crowds continued for three days together (an uncommon curiosity in that place), and the death of Cato triumphed over the injuries of Cæsar everywhere. At our taking leave, we had the thanks of the Vice-Chancellor, 'for the decency and order observed by our whole society;' an honour which had not always been paid on the same occasion." Four hundred and fifty pounds clear profit were shared by the managers, who gave the actors double pay, and sent a contribution of £50 towards the repairs of St. Mary's Church.

The church, of which Booth was intended to be a minister, added its approbation, through Dr. Smalridge, Dean of Carlisle, Booth's fellow at Westminster, who was present at the performance in Oxford. "I heartily wish," said the Dean, "all discourses from the pulpit were as instructive and edifying, as pathetic and affecting, as that which the audience was then entertained with from the stage." This is a reproach to church-preachers at the cost of a compliment to Booth; and old Compton, ex-dragoon,

and now dying Bishop of London, would not have relished it. Some of the metropolitan pulpits were, no doubt, less "entertaining" than the stage, but many of them were held to good purpose; and, as for the Nonconformist chapels, of which Smalridge knew nothing,—there, enthusiastic Pomfret and Matthew Clarke were drawing great crowds; Bradbury, that cheerful-minded patriarch of the Dissenters, was even more entertaining; while Neale was pathetic and earnest in Aldersgate Street; and John Gale, affecting and zealous, amid his eager hearers in the Barbican. There is no greater mistake than in supposing that at this time the whole London world was engaged in resorting exclusively to the theatres, and especially to behold Booth in Cato.

The grandeur of this piece has become somewhat dulled, but it contains more true sayings constantly quoted than any other English work, save Gray's Elegy. It has been translated into French, Italian, Latin and Russian, and has been played in Italy and in the Jesuits' College at St. Omer. Pope adorned it with a prologue; Dr. Garth trimmed it with an epilogue; dozens of poets wrote testimonial verses; tippling Eusden gave it his solemn sanction, while Dennis, with some "horseplay raillery," but with irrefutable argument, inexorably proved that, despite beauties of diction, it is one of the most absurd, inconsistent and unnatural plays ever conceived by poet. But, Johnson remarks truly, "as we love better to be pleased than to be taught, Cato is read, and the critic is neglected."

Booth reaped no brighter triumph than in this character, in which he has had worthy, but never equally, able successors. Boheme was respectable in it; Quin imposing, and generally successful; Sheridan, conventional, but grandly eloquent: Mossop, heavy; Walker, a failure; Digges, stagy; Kemble, next to the original; Pope, "mouthy;" Cooke, altogether out of his line; Wright, weak; Young, traditional, but effective; and Vandenhoff, classically correct and statuesque. It was Booth's good fortune not to be admired less because of the affection for Betterton in the hearts of surviving admirers. This is manifest from the lines of Pope—

> "On Avon's bank where flow'rs eternal blow,
> If I but ask,—if any weed can grow?—
> One tragic sentence if I dare deride,
> Which Betterton's grave action dignified,
> Or well-mouthed Booth with emphasis proclaims,
> (Though but perhaps a muster-roll of names)
> How will our fathers rise up in a rage,
> And swear all shame is lost in George's age."

The performance of Cato raised Booth to fortune as well as to fame; and through Bolingbroke he was appointed to a share in the profits of the management of Drury Lane, with Cibber, Wilks, and Doggett. Cibber hints that Booth owed his promotion as much to his Tory sentiments as to his merits in acting Cato. The new partner had to pay £600 for his share of the stock property, "which was to be paid by such sums as should arise from half his profits of acting, till the whole was discharged." This incumbrance upon his share he discharged out of the income he received in the first year of his joint management.

His fame, however, by this time had culminated. He sustained it well, but he cannot be said to have increased it. No other such a creation as Cato fell to his lot. Young and Thomson could not serve him as Addison and opportunity had done, and if he can be said to have won additional laurels after Cato, it was in the season of 1722-23, when he played Young Bevil, in Steele's "Conscious Lovers," with a success which belied the assertion that he was inefficient in genteel comedy.

Meanwhile, a success off the stage secured him as much happiness as, on it, he had acquired wealth and reputation. The home he had kept with Susan Mountfort was broken up. In the course of this "intimate alliance of strict friendship," as the moral euphuists called it, Booth had acted with remarkable generosity towards the lady. In the year 1714, they bought several tickets in the State Lottery, and agreed to share equally whatever fortune might ensue. Booth gained nothing; the lady won a prize of £5,000, and kept it. His friends counselled him to claim half the sum, but he laughingly remarked that there had never been any but a verbal agreement on the matter; and since the result had been fortunate for his friend, she should enjoy it all.

A truer friend he found in Miss Santlow, the "Santlow famed for dance," of Gay. From the *ballet* she had passed to the dignity of an actress, and Booth had been enamoured of her "poetry of motion" before he had played Worthy to her Dorcas Zeal. He described her, with all due ardour, in an *Ode on Mira, dancing*,—as resembling Venus in shape, air, mien, and eyes, as striking a whole theatre with love, when alone she filled the spacious scene. Thus was Miss Santlow in the popular Cato's eyes:—

"Whether her easy body bend,
Or her fair bosom heave with sighs,

Whether her graceful arms extend,
Or gently fall, or slowly rise,
Or returning, or advancing;
Swimming round, or side-long glancing;
Gods, how divine an air
Harmonious gesture gives the fair."

Her grace of motion effected more than eloquence, at least so Booth thought, who thus sang the nymph in her more accelerated steps to conquest:—

"But now the flying fingers strike the lyre,
The sprightly notes the nymph inspire.
She whirls around! she bounds! she springs!
As if Jove's messenger had lent her wings.
Such Daphne was . . . .
Such were her lovely limbs, so flushed her charming face!
So round her neck! her eyes so fair!
So rose her swelling chest! so flow'd her amber hair!
While her swift feet outstript the wind,
And left the enamour'd God of Day behind."

Now, this goddess became to Booth one of the truest, most charming, and most unselfish of mortal wives. But see of what perilous stuff *she* was made who enraptured the generally unruffled poet Thomson almost as much as she did Barton Booth. For *her* smiles, Marlborough had given what he least cared to part with—gold. Craggs, the Secretary of State, albeit a barber's son, had made her spouse, in all but name, and their daughter was mother of the first Lord St. Germans, and, by a second marriage, of the first Marquis of Abercorn. The Santlow blood, which was very good blood, from Little Fontend, in Dorsetshire, thus danced itself into very excellent company; but the aristocracy gave good blood to the stage, as well as took gay blood from it. Contemporary with Booth and Mrs. Santlow were the sisters, frolic Mrs. Bicknell and Mrs. Younger. They were nearly related to Keith, Earl Marshal of Scotland. Their father had served in Flanders under King William, "perhaps," says Mr. Carruthers, in his *Life of Pope*, "rode by the side of Steele, whence Steele's interest in Mrs. Bicknell, whom he praises in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*." Mrs. Younger, in middle age, married John, brother of the seventh Earl of Winchelsea.

When Miss Santlow left the ballet for comedy, it was accounted one of the lucky incidents in the fortune of Drury. Dorcas Zeal,

in the "Fair Quaker of Deal," was the first original part in which Miss Santlow appeared. Cibber says, somewhat equivocally, "that she was then in the full bloom of what beauty she might pretend to," and he, not very logically adds, that her reception as an actress was, perhaps, owing to the admiration she had excited as a dancer. The part was suited to her figure and capacity. "The gentle softness of her voice, the composed innocence of her aspect, the modesty of her dress, the reserved decency of her gesture, and the simplicity of the sentiments that naturally fell from her, made her seem the amiable maid she represented."

Many admirers, however, regretted that she had abandoned the ballet for the drama. They mourned as if Terpsichore herself had been on earth to charm mankind, and had gone never to return. They remembered, longed for, and now longed in vain for, that sight which used to set a whole audience half distraught with delight, when in the very ecstacy of her dance, Santlow contrived to loosen her clustering amber hair, and letting it fall upon such a neck and shoulders as Praxiteles could more readily imagine than imitate, danced on, the locks flying in the air, and half a dozen hearts at the end of every one of them.

The union of Booth and Miss Santlow was as productive of happiness as that of Betterton and Miss Saunderson. Booth lost no opportunity to render justice to the excellence of his wife. This actor's leisure was a learned leisure. Once, in his poetic vein, when turning an ode of his favourite *Horace* into English, he went into an original digression on the becomingness of a married life, and the peculiar felicity it had brought to himself. Thus sang the Benedict when the union was a few brief years old:—

> "Happy the hour when first our souls were joined!
> The social virtues and the cheerful mind
> Have ever crowned our days, beguiled our pain;
> Strangers to discord and her clamorous train.
> Connubial friendship, hail! but haste away,
> The lark and nightingale reproach thy stay;
> From splendid theatres to rural scenes,
> Joyons retire! so bounteous Heaven ordains.
> There we may dwell in peace.
> There bless the rising morn, and flow'ry field,
> Charm'd with the guiltless sports the woods and waters yield."

But neither the married nor the professional life of Booth was destined to be of long continuance. His health began to give way before he was forty. The managers hoped they had found a

fair substitute for him in the actor, Elrington. Tom Elrington subsequently became so great a favourite with the Dublin audience that they remembered his Bajazet as preferable to that of Barry or Mossop, on the ground that in that character his voice could be heard beyond the Blind Quay, whereas that of the other-named actors was not audible outside the house! By his mad scene in Orestes, an Irish fiddler lost his senses! Elrington was originally apprenticed to an upholsterer in Covent Garden, was wont to attend plays, unknown to his master, and to act in them with equal lack of sanction. His master, a vivacious Frenchman, one day came upon him as, under the instruction of Chetwood, he was studying a part in some ranting tragedy. The apprentice, in his agitation, sewed his book up inside the cushion, on which he was at work, "while he and Chetwood exchanged many a desponding look, and every stitch went to both their hearts." The offenders escaped detection; but on another occasion the Frenchman came upon his apprentice as he was enacting the Ghost in "Hamlet," when he laid the spirit, with irresistible effect of his good right arm. Elrington was, from the beginning, a sort of "copper Booth." His first appearance on the stage, at Drury Lane, in 1709, was in Oronooko, the character in which Booth had made his *coup d'essai* in Dublin. When Cibber refused to allow him to play Torrisimond, while Elrington was yet young, a noble friend of the actor asked the manager to assign cause for the refusal. Colley was not at a loss. "It is not with us as with you, my lord," said he; "your lordship is sensible that there is no difficulty in filling places at court, you cannot be at a loss for persons to act their part there; but I assure you it is quite otherwise in our theatrical world. If we should invest people with characters they should be unable to support, we should be undone."

Elrington attempted to take rank in London with Booth himself. He began the attempt in his favourite part of Bajazet, Booth playing Tamerlane. The latter, we are told by Victor, "being in full force, and perhaps animated by a spirit of emulation towards the new Bajazet, exerted all his powers; and Elrington owned to his friends, that never having felt the force of such an actor, he was not aware that it was in the power of mortal to soar so much above him and shrink him into nothing." Booth was quite satisfied with his own success, for he complimented Elrington on *his*. Elrington possessed many of the natural and some of the acquired qualifications of Booth, whom

perhaps he equalled in Oronooko. He undoubtedly excelled Mills in Zanga. After Dr. Young had seen Elrington play it, he went round, shook him cordially by the hand, and declared he had never seen the part done such justice to, as by him;—"acknowledging, with some regret," says Dr. Lewis, "that Mills did but growl and mouth the character." Such was the actor who became for a time Booth's "double," and might have become his rival. During the illness of the latter, in 1728-9, Elrington was the principal support of tragedy in Drury Lane. At that time, says Davies, "the managers were so well convinced of his importance to them, that they offered him his own conditions, if he would engage with them for a term of years." Elrington replied,—"I am truly sensible of the value of your offer, but in Ireland I am so well rewarded for my services, that I cannot think of leaving it, on any consideration. There is not a gentleman's house to which I am not a welcome visitor."

Booth has been called indolent, but he was never so when in health, and before a fitting audience. On one thin night, indeed, he was enacting Othello rather languidly; but he suddenly began to exert himself to the utmost, in the great scene of the third act. On coming off the stage, he was asked the cause of this sudden effort. "I saw an Oxford man in the pit," he answered, "for whose judgment I had more respect than for that of the rest of the audience;" and he played the Moor to that one, but efficient, judge. To an unappreciating audience he could exhibit an almost contemptuous disinclination to exert himself. On one occasion of this sort he was made painfully sensible of his mistake, and a note was addressed to him from the stage-box, the purport of which was to know whether he was acting for his own diversion or in the service and for the entertainment of the public? On another occasion, with a thin house, and a cold audience, he was languidly going through one of his usually grandest impersonations, namely, Pyrrhus. At his very dullest scene he started into the utmost brilliancy and effectiveness. His eye had just previously detected in the pit a gentleman, named Stanyan, the friend of Addison and Steele, and the correspondent of the Earl of Manchester. Stanyan was an accomplished man and a judicious critic. Booth played to him with the utmost care and corresponding success. "No, no!" he exclaimed, as he passed behind the scenes, radiant with the effect he had produced, "I will not have it said at Button's, that Barton Booth is losing his powers!" Some causes of his lan-

guor, may, perhaps, be traced to the too warm patronage he received, or rather friendship, at the hands of the nobility. It was no uncommon thing for "a carriage and six" to be in waiting for him—the equipage of some court friend—which conveyed him, in what was then considered, the brief period of three hours, to Windsor, and back again the next day, in time for play or rehearsal. This agitated sort of life seriously affected his health; and, on one occasion his recovery was despaired of. But the public favourite was restored to the town; and learned Mattaire celebrated the event in a Latin ode, in which he did honour to the memory of Betterton, and the living and invigorated genius of Booth. That genius was not so perfect as that of his great predecessor. When able to go to the theatre, though not yet able to perform, he saw Wilks play two of his parts,—Jaffier and Hastings,—and heard the applause which was awarded to his efforts; and the sound was ungrateful to the ears of the philosophical and unimpassioned Cato. But Jaffier was one of his triumphs; and he whose tenderness, pity and terror, had touched the hearts of a whole audience, was painfully affected at the triumph of another, though achieved by different means.

One of the secrets of his own success lay, undoubtedly, in his education, feeling, and judgment. It may be readily seen from Aaron Hill's rather elaborate criticism, that he was an actor who made "points;" "he could soften and slide over, with an elegant negligence, the improprieties of a part he acted; while, on the contrary, he could dwell with energy upon the beauties, as if he exerted a latent spirit, which he kept back for such an occasion, that he might alarm, awaken, and transport, in those places only which were worthy of his best exertions." This was really to depend on "points;" and was, perhaps, a defect in a player of whom it has been said, that "he had learning to understand perfectly what it was his part to speak, and judgment to know how it agreed or disagreed with his character." The following, by Hill, is as graphic as anything in Cibber:—"Booth had a talent at discovering the passions, where they lay hid in some celebrated parts, by the injudicious practice of other actors; when he had discovered, he soon grew able to express them; and his secret of attaining this great lesson of the theatre, was an adaptation of his look to his voice, by which artful imitation of nature, the variations in the sounds of his words gave propriety to every change in his countenance. So that it was Mr. Booth's peculiar felicity to be heard and seen the same; whether as the pleased, the

grieved, the pitying, the reproachful, or the angry. One would be almost tempted to borrow the aid of a very bold figure, and to express this excellency the more significantly, by permission to affirm, that *the Blind might have seen him in his voice, and the Deaf have heard him in his visage.*"

In his later years, says another critic, "his merit as an actor was unrivalled, and even so extraordinary, as to be almost beyond the reach of envy." His Pyrrhus, Othello, Cato, and his Polydore, in the "Orphan" in which he was never equalled, were long the theme of admiration to his survivors, as were in a less degree, his sorrowing and not roaring Lear, his manly yet not blustering Hotspur. Dickey Brass and Dorimant, Wildair and Sir Charles Easy, Pinchwife, Manley, and Young Bevil, were among the best of his essays in comedy,—where, however, he was surpassed by Wilks. "But then, I believe," says a critic, "no one will say he did not appear the fine gentleman in the character of Bevil, in the 'Conscious Lovers.' He *once* played Falstaff in the presence of Queen Anne, 'to the delight of the whole audience.' "

Aaron Hill, curiously statistical, states, that by the peculiar delivery of certain sentiments in Cato, Booth was always sure of obtaining from eighteen to twenty rounds of applause during the evening,—marks of approval, both of matter and manner. Like Betterton, he abounded in feeling. There was nothing of the stolidity of "Punch" in either of them. Betterton is said to have sometimes turned as "white as his neck-cloth," on seeing his father's ghost; while Booth, when playing the Ghost to Betterton's Hamlet, was once so horror-stricken at his distraught aspect, as to be too disconcerted to proceed, for a while, in his part. Either actor, however, knew how far to safely yield themselves to feeling. Judgment was always within call; the head ready to control the heart, however wildly it might be impelled by the latter. "Passion," as Baron remarked, "knows more than art."

I have noticed the report that Booth and Wilks were jealous of each other; I think there was more of emulation than of envy between them. Booth could make sacrifices in favour of young actors as unreservedly as Betterton. I find, even when he was in possession of all the leading parts, that he as often played Laertes, or even Horatio, as the Ghost or Hamlet. His Laertes was wonderfully fine, and in a great actor's hands, may be made, in the fifth act, at least, equal with the princely Dane himself. Again, although his Othello was one of his grandest impersona-

tions, he would take Cassio, in order to give an aspirant a chance of triumph in the Moor. In "Macbeth," Booth played, one night, the hero of the piece; on another, Banquo; and on a third, the little part of Lennox. He was quite content that Cibber should play Wolsey, while he captivated the audience by enacting the King. His Henry was a mixture of frank humour, dignity, and sternness. Theophilus Cibber says enough to convince us that Booth, in the King, could be familiar without being vulgar, and that his anger was of the quality that excites terror. He pronounced the four words, "Go thy ways, Kate," with such a happy emphasis as to win admiration and applause; and "when he said, 'Now, to breakfast with what appetite you may,' his expression was rapid and vehement, and his look tremendous." The credit attached to the acting of inferior parts by leading players was shared with Booth by Wilks and Cibber. Of the latter, his son says, that "though justly esteemed the first comedian of his time, and superior to all we have since beheld, he has played several parts, to keep up the spirit of some comedies, which you will now scarcely find one player in twenty who will not reject as beneath his Mock-Excellence."

Some indolence was excusable in actors who ordinarily laboured as Booth did. As an instance of the toil which they had to endure for the sake of applause, I will notice that in the season of 1712-13, when Booth studied, played, and triumphed in Cato, he, within not many weeks, studied and performed five original and very varied characters, Cato being the last of a roll, which included Arviragus, in the "Successful Pirate;" Captain Stanworth, in the "Female Advocates;" Captain Wildish, in "Humours of the Army;" Cinna, in an adaptation of Corneille's play, and finally, Cato. No doubt Booth was finest when put upon his mettle. In May, 1726, for instance, Giffard from Dublin appeared at Drury Lane, as the Prince of Wales, in "Henry IV." The debutant was known to be an admirer of the Hotspur of roaring Elrington. The Percy was one of Booth's most perfect exhibitions; and, ill as he was on the night he was to play it to Giffard's Harry, he protested that he would surprise the new comer, and the house too; and he played with such grace, fire, and energy, that the audience were beside themselves with ecstacy, and the new actor was profuse, at the side-scenes, and even out of hearing of Booth, in acknowledgment of the great master and his superiority over every living competitor.

Betterton cared little if his audience was select, provided it

also was judicious. Booth loved a full house, though he could play his best to a solitary, but competent, individual in the pit. He considered profit after fame, and thought that large audiences tended to the increase of both. The intercourse between audience and actor was, in his time, more intimate and familiar than it is now. Thus we see Booth entering a coffee-house in Bow Street, one morning after he had played Varanes, on the preceding night. The gentlemen present, all playgoers, as naturally as they were coffee-house frequenters, cluster round him, and acknowledge the pleasure they had enjoyed in witnessing him act. These pleasant morning critics only venture to blame him for allowing such unmeaning stuff as the pantomime of "Perseus and Andromeda" to follow the classical tragedy and mar its impression But the ballet-pantomime draws great houses, and is therefore a less indignity in Booth's eye, than half empty benches. It was not the business of managers, he said, to be wise to empty boxes. "There were many more spectators," he said, "than men of taste and judgment; and if by the artifice of a pantomime they could entice a greater number to partake of a good play than could be drawn without it, he could not see any great harm in it; and that, as those pieces were performed after the play, they were no interruption to it." In short, he held pantomimes to be rank nonsense, which might be rendered useful, after the fashion of his explanation.

His retirement from the stage may be laid to the importunity of Mr. Theobald, who urged him to act in the "Double Falsehood." Booth struggled through the part of Julio, for a week, in the season of 1727-28, and then withdrew, utterly cast down, and in his forty-sixth year. Broxham, Friend, Colebatch, and Mead, came with their canes, perukes, pills, and proposals, and failing to restore him, they sent him away from London The sick player and his wife wandered from town to Bath, from the unavailing springs there to Ostend, thence to Antwerp, and on to Holland, to consult Boerhaave, who could only tell the invalid that in England a man should never leave off his winter clothing till midsummer-day, and that he should resume it the day after. From Holland the sad couple came home to Hampstead, and ultimately back to London, where fever, jaundice, and other maladies attacked Booth with intermitting severity. Here, in May, 1733, a quack doctor persuaded him that if he would take "crude mercury" it would not only prevent the return of the fever, but effectually cure him of all his complaints. As we are gravely in-

formed that, within five days the poor victim "took within two ounces of two pounds weight of mercury," we are not surprised to hear that at the end of that time Booth was *in extremis*, and that Sir Hans Sloane was at his bedside to accelerate, as it would seem, the catastrophe. To peruse what followed is like reading the details of an assassination. As if the two pounds, minus two ounces, of mercury were not enough, poor Booth was bled profusely at the jugular, his feet were plastered, and his scalp was blistered; he was assailed in various ways by cathartics and mocked by emulsions; the *Daily Post* announced that he lay a-dying at his house in Hart Street, other notices pronounced him moribund in Charles Street; but he was alive on the morning of the 10th of May, 1733, when a triad of prescriptions being applied against him, Cato at length happily succumbed. But the surgeons would not let the dead actor rest; they opened his body, and dived into its recesses, and called things by strong names, and avoided technicalities; and after declaring everything to be very much worse than the state of Denmark, as briefly described by *Hamlet*, Alexander Small, the especial examiner, signing the report, added a postscript thereto, implying that "there was no fault in any part of his body, but what is here mentioned." Poor fellow! We are told that he recovered from his fever, but that he died of the jaundice, helped, I think, by the treatment!

A few days subsequently the body was privately interred in Cowley Church, near Uxbridge, where he occasionally resided. A few old friends, and some dearer than friends, accompanied him to the grave. His will was as a kiss on either cheek of his beautiful widow, and a slap on both cheeks of sundry of his relations. To the former he left everything he had possessed, and for the very best of reasons. "As I have been," he says, "a man much known and talked of, my not leaving legacies to my relations may give occasion to censorious people to reflect upon my conduct in this latter act of my life; therefore, I think it necessary to declare that I have considered my circumstances, and finding, upon a strict examination, that all I am now possessed of does not amount to two-thirds of the fortune my wife brought me on the day of our marriage, together with the yearly additions and advantages since arising from her laborious employment on the stage during twelve years past, I thought myself bound by honesty, honour, and gratitude, due to her constant affection, not to give away any part of the remainder of her fortune at my death, having already bestowed, in free gifts, upon my sister, Barbara

Rogers, upwards of thirteen hundred pounds, *out of my wife's substance*, and full four hundred pounds of her money on my undeserving brother, George Booth (besides the gifts they received before my marriage), and all those benefits were conferred on my said brother and sister, from time to time, at the earnest solicitation of my wife, who was perpetually entreating me to continue the allowance I gave my relations before my marriage. The inhuman return that has been made my wife for these obligations, by my sister, I forbear to mention." This was justice without vengeance, and worthy of the sage, of whom Booth was the most finished representative. The generosity of Hester Santlow, too, has been fittingly preserved in the will; the whole of which is a social illustration of the times.

In Westminster, "Booth Street" keeps up the actor's name; and "Cowley Street" the remembrance of his proprietorship of a country estate near Uxbridge. To pass through the former street is like being transported to the times of Queen Anne. It is a quaint old locality, very little changed since the period in which Barton built it. No great stretch of imagination is required to fancy the original Pyrrhus and Cato gliding along the shady side, with a smile on his lips and a certain fire in his eye. He is thinking of Miss Santlow!

With Booth slowly dying, and Mrs. Oldfield often too ill to act, the prospects of Drury began to wane in 1728-29; but the appearance of Miss Rafter as Dorinda, in Dryden's version of the "Tempest," on the 2nd of January, 1729, marks the first step in the bright career of one who is better remembered as Kitty Clive. Congreve and Steele died in 1729, leaving no one but Cibber fit to compete with them in comedy. Musical pieces, born of Gay's success, brought no golden results to the house, which was happy in retaining Wilks.

On the other hand, in the Fields, classical tragedy took the lead, with Quin. But classical tragedy reaped no golden harvests. Barford's "Virgin Queen" lives but in a line of Pope. The "Themistocles" of young Madden lived but a few nights. Mrs. Heywood succeeded as ill with her romantic tragedy, "Frederick, Duke of Brunswick." But the "Beggar's Opera" could always fill the house whether Miss Cantrell warbled Polly, with the old cast, or children played all the parts—a foolish novelty, not unattractive. Gay himself was doomed to suffer disappointment; for the authorities suppressed his "Polly," a vapid continuation

of the fortunes of Macheath and the lady, and thereby drove almost to disaffection not only Gay, but his patrons, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, who punished the Court by absenting themselves from its pleasures and duties.

Drury Lane was not fortunate in any of its new pieces in the season of 1729-30. The Rev. James Millar's "Humours of Oxford," Martyn's "Timoleon," even the first dramatic attempt of Thomson, in "Sophonisba," could not stir the town. Thomson's play is less tender than Lee's; his Sophonisba more stern and patriotic, and less loving. The author himself described her as a "female Cato," and, in the Epilogue, not too delicately indicated that if the audience would only applaud a native poet,

> "Then other Shakspeares yet may rouse the stage,
> And other Otways melt another age."

Cibber was fairly hissed out of the character of Scipio. Mrs Oldfield, alone, made a sensation, especially in the delivery of the line, "Not one base word of Carthage—on thy soul!" Her grandeur of action, her stern expression, and her powerful tone of voice, elicited enthusiastic applause.

The corresponding season at Lincoln's Inn Fields was the usual one of an unfashionable house. The only incidents worth recording being the playing of Macheath by Quin, for his benefit; and the sudden death of Spiller, stricken by apoplexy, as he was playing in the "Rape of Proserpine." His Mat o' the Mint, delighted the town as much because it was exquisitely sung, as it was naturally acted. Spiller once so charmed a turnkey (in whose guard he lay for debt) that the man took the "Bull and Butcher" in Clare Market, that he might have more of the actor's company. The house was known as the "Spiller's Head," and was resorted to by artists. Laguerre painted Spiller's portrait, with one hand on a punch-bowl, as a sign for the house, but the player did not live to see it set up!

As the town grew, so also did theatres increase; that in Goodman's Fields, and the little house in the Haymarket, were open this season. At the former Giffard and his wife led in tragedy and comedy; but the company was generally weak. Not so the authors who wrote for the house. First among them was Fielding, a young fellow of three and twenty; bred to the law, but driven to the drama by the inability of his father, the General, to supply him with funds. His first play, "Love in Several Masques," was acted at Drury Lane in 1728; his second, and a

better, the "Temple Beau," was played at Goodman's Fields. Ralph lives in the abuse lavished on him by Pope; but his "Fashionable Lady," Walker's "Fate of Villany," and Mottley's "Widow Bewitched," excited less attention than Fielding's burlesque-tragedy of "Tom Thumb," at the Haymarket, in which the weakness and bombast of late or contemporary writers were copied with wonderful effect. Of the other pieces I need not disturb the dust. Let me rather, contemplating that of Mrs. Oldfield, glance at the career of that great actress, who living knew no rival, and in her peculiar line has never been excelled.

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. OLDFIELD.

Let the reader fancy himself at the close of the seventeenth century; the scene is at the Mitre Tavern in St. James's Market, kept by Mrs. Voss. It is a quiet summer evening, and, after the fatigues of the day are over, and before the later business of the night has commenced, that buxom lady is reclining in an easy chair, listening to a fair young creature, her sister, who is reading aloud, and is enjoying what she reads. Her eyes, like Kathleen's in the song, are beaming with light, her face glowing with intelligence and feeling. Even an elderly lady, their mother, turns away from the picture of her husband, who had ridden in the Guards, and held a commission under James II., to gaze with admiration on her brilliant young daughter; who, it is said, at this present reading, is only an apprentice to a seamstress in King Street, Westminster. But the soul of Thalia is under her boddice, into a neater than which, Anadyomene could not have laced herself. She is rapt in the reading, and with book held out, and face upraised, and figure displayed at its very best, she enthrals her audience, unconscious herself that this is more numerous than she might have supposed. On the threshold of the open door stand a couple of guests; one of them is a gay young fellow, smartly dressed, a semi-military look about him, good humour rippling over his face, combined with an air of astonishment and delight. This is Captain Farquhar. His sight and hearing are wholly concentrated on that enchanting girl, Anne Oldfield, who, unmindful of aught but the "Scornful Lady," continues still reading aloud that rattling comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher.

Captain Farquhar betrayed his presence by his involuntary applause. The girl looked towards him more pleased than

abashed; and when the captain pronounced that there was in her the stuff for an exquisite actress, the fluttered thing clasped her hands, glowed at the prophecy, and protested in her turn, that of all conditions it was the one she wished most ardently to fulfil. From that moment the glory and the mischief were commenced. The tall girl stood up, her large eyes dilating, the assured future Lady Betty Modish and Biddy Tipkin, Farquhar's own Sylvia and Mrs. Sullen, the Violante and the Lady Townly that were to set the play-going world mad with delight; the Andromache, Marcia, and Jane Shore, that were to wring tears from them; the supreme lady in all, but chiefest in comedy; and that "genteel," for which she seemed expressly born.

Farquhar talked of her to Vanbrugh, and Vanbrugh introduced her to Rich, and Rich took her into his company, assigned her a beginner's salary, fifteen shillings a week, and gave her nothing to do. She had a better life of it at the seamstress's in King Street. But she had time to spare, and leisure to wait. She was barely fifteen, when, in 1700, she played Alinda, in Vanbrugh's "Pilgrim." The gentle Alinda suited the years and inexperience of Mrs. Oldfield; her youth was in her favour, and her figure,—but, therewith, was such diffidence, that she had not courage enough to modulate her voice.* Cibber watched her; he could see nothing to commend, save her graceful person. But there reached his ear occasional silver tones, which seemed to assure him of the rare excellence of the instrument. Still, like "the great Mrs. Barry," her first appearances were failures. Warmed by encouraging applause, however, the promise ripened, and with opportunity, the perfection that came was demonstrated both to watchful Cibber and an expectant public.

When Mrs. Verbruggen, the Mrs. Mountfort of earlier days, died, there was a scramble for her parts. Each of the more influential actresses obtained several; but to young and unobtrusive Mrs. Oldfield, there fell but one,—the mediocre part of Leonora, in "Sir Courtly Nice." Cibber reluctantly ran over the scenes with her, at her request, in which the Knight and the Lady meet. He was careless, from lack of appreciation of the actress; *she* was piqued, and sullenly repeated the words set down for her. There was, in short, a mutual distaste. *But*, when the night came, Colley saw the almost perfect actress before him,—"she had," he says, "a just occasion to triumph over the error of my judgment, by the almost amazement that her unexpected performance awaked me to; so sudden and forward a

step into nature I had never seen. And what made her performance more valuable was, that I knew it all proceeded from her own understanding,—untaught and unassisted by any one more experienced actor."

Colley Cibber had then, in his desk, the unfinished manuscript of his "Careless Husband;" it had long lain there, through the author's hopelessness of finding an actress who would realise his idea of Lady Betty Modish. He had no longer any doubt. He at once finished the piece, brought it on the stage, and silent as to his own share in the triumph, attributed it all to Mrs. Oldfield. "Not only to the uncommon excellence of her action; but even to her personal manner of conversing." Respecting which, Cibber adds, that "had her birth placed her in a higher rank of life, she had certainly appeared to be, in reality, what in the play she only excellently acted,—an agreeably gay woman of quality, a little too conscious of her natural attractions." I will remark that, as she really appeared to be so, her birth (she was a gentleman's daughter) could not prevent her from appearing so. Cibber avows, what the testimony of Walpole confirms, that he had "often seen her in private societies, where women of the best rank might have borrowed some part of her behaviour without the least diminution of their sense or dignity."

The merit of Mrs. Oldfield was not at first recognised by Gildon, who, in his "Comparison between the two Stages," classes her among "the rubbish," of which the stage should be swept. He could not see that Oldfield would be the successor of that "miracle," Mrs. Verbruggen, and would, in some parts, even excel her. By the year 1706, she had risen to be on an equality with such a brilliant favourite as Mrs. Bracegirdle, whom, in the opinion of many, her younger competitor surpassed. The salary of the latter then, and for some years later, was not, however, a large one, if measured by modern rule. Four pounds a week, with a benefit,—in all, little more than £250 a year, cannot be called excessive guerdon. Her own benefit was always profitable; but I am sorry to add, that this joyous-looking creature, apparently brimful of good nature, was sometimes reluctant to play for the benefit of her colleagues. Subsequently, her revenue from stage-salary and benefit averaged about £500 a year.

A remark of her's to Cibber, shows how she entered into the spirit of her parts. Cibber had taken Dickey Norris's part of Barnaby Brittle, in the "Amorous Widow," in which Mrs. Oldfield played Barnaby's wife. The couple are a sort of George

Dandin and his spouse. When the play was over, Cibber asked her, in his familiar way, "Nancy, how did you like your new husband?" "Very well," said she; "but not half so well as Dickey Norris." "How so?" asked Cibber. "You are too important a figure," she answered; "but Dickey is so diminutive, and looks so sneaking, that he seems born to be deceived; and when he plays with me, I make him what a husband most dislikes to be, with hearty good will." Genest cites Cibber, Chetwood and Davies, in order to describe her adequately. "After her success in Lady Betty Modish," he says, "all that nature had given her of the actress seems to have risen to its full perfection; but the variety of her powers could not be known till she was seen in variety of characters which, as fast as they fell to her, she equally excelled in. In the wearing of her person she was particularly fortunate; her figure was always improving, to her thirty-sixth year; but her excellence in acting was never at a stand. And Lady Townly, one of her last new parts, was a proof that she was still able to do more, if more could have been done for her." Davies, after noticing her figure and expression, says of her "large speaking eyes," that in some particular comic situations she kept them half shut, especially when she intended to give effect to some brilliant or gay thought In sprightliness of air and elegance of manner, she excelled all actresses, and was greatly superior in the clear, sonorous, and harmonious tones of her voice." Wilks and the inimitable She are thus photographed for posterity. "Wilks's Copper Captain was esteemed one of his best characters. Mrs. Oldfield was equally happy in Estifania. When she drew the pistol from her pocket, pretending to shoot Perez, Wilks drew back, as if greatly terrified, and in a tremulous voice, uttered, 'What, thine own husband!' To which she replied, with archness of countenance and a half shut eye, 'Let mine own husband then be in 's own wits,' in a tone of voice in imitation of his, that the theatre was in a tumult of applause." From Cibber, again, we learn that she was modest and unpresuming; that in all the parts she undertook, she sought enlightenment and instruction from every quarter, "but it was a hard matter to give her a hint that she was not able to improve." With managers she was not exacting; "she lost nothing by her easy conduct; she had everything she asked, which she took care should be always reasonable, because she hated as much to be grudged as to be denied a civility." Like Mrs. Barry, she entered fully into the character she had to represent, and examined it closely, in order to grasp

it effectually. When the "Beaux' Stratagem" was in rehearsal (1707), in which she played Mrs Sullen, she remarked to Wilks, that she thought the author had dealt too freely with Mrs. Sullen, in giving her to Archer, without such a proper divorce as would be a security to her honour. Wilks communicated this to the author. "Tell her," said poor Farquhar, who was then dying, "that for her peace of mind's sake, I'll get a real divorce, marry her myself, and give her my bond she shall be a real widow in less than a fortnight." Mrs. Oldfield was the original representative of sixty-five characters. The greater number of these belong to genteel comedy. Ecstatic as her audiences were with her Lady Betty, they were even more so at her Lady Townly,—an ecstacy in which the managers shared, for they immediately added fifty guineas to her salary. It was just the sum which the benevolent actress gave annually to that most contemptibly helpless personage, Savage.

Humour, grace, vivacity,—all were exuberant on the stage, when she and Wilks were playing against each other. Indeed, one can hardly realise the idea of this supreme queen of comedy wearing the robe and illustrating the sorrows of tragedy. She, for her own part, disliked the latter vocation. She hated, as she said often, to have a page dragging her tail about. "Why do not they give these parts to Porter? She can put on a better tragedy-face than I can." Earnest as she was, however, in these characters before the audience, she was frolicsome at rehearsal. When "Cato" was in preparation, Addison attended the rehearsals, and Swift was at Addison's side, making suggestions, and marking the characteristics of the lively people about him. He never had a good word for woman, and consequently he had his usual coarse epithet for Mrs. Oldfield, speaking of her as "the drab that played Cato's daughter;" and railing at her for her hilarity while rehearsing that passionate part, and, in her forgetfulness, calling merrily out to the prompter, "What next? what next?" Yet this hilarious actress played Cleopatra with dignity, and Calista with feeling. She accepted with reluctance the part of Semandra, in "Mithridates," when that tragedy was revived in 1708; but she performed the part to perfection, and became reconciled to tragedy, by reason of her success. In these characters, however, she could be excelled by others, but in Lady Betty Modish and Lady Townly, she was probably never equalled. In the comedy of lower life, she was, perhaps, less original; at least, Anthony Aston remarks, that in free comedy she borrowed some-

thing from Mrs. Verbruggen's manner. When Wilks, as Lord Townly, exclaimed, "Prodigious!" in the famous scene with his lady, played by Mrs. Oldfield, the house applied it to her acting, and broke into repeated rounds of applause. "Who should act genteel comedy, perfectly," asks Walpole, "but people of fashion, that have sense? Actors and actresses can only guess at the tone of high life, and cannot be inspired with it. Why are there so few genteel comedies, but because most comedies are written by men not of that sphere. Etherege, Congreve, Vanbrugh and Cibber wrote genteel comedy, because they lived in the best company; and Mrs. Oldfield played it so well, because she not only followed, but often set the fashion. General Burgoyne has writ the best modern comedy for the same reason; and Miss Farren is as excellent as Mrs. Oldfield, because she has lived with the best style of men in England. Farquhar's plays talk the language of a marching regiment in country quarters. Wycherley, Dryden, Mrs. Centlivre, &c., wrote as if they had only lived in the *Rose Tavern*; but then the Court lived in Drury Lane too, and Lady Dorchester and Nell Gwyn were equally good company. Walpole placed Molière "Senor Moleiro," as Downes absurdly calls him, at the head of the comic writers of the seventeenth century. "Who upon earth," he says, "has written such perfect *comedies?* for the 'Careless Husband' is but *one;* the 'Nonjuror' was built on the 'Tartuffe,' and if the Man of Mode (Etherege) and Vanbrugh are excellent, they are too indelicate; and Congreve, who beat all for wit, is not always natural, still less, simple."

It has been said of Mrs. Oldfield, that she never troubled the peace of any lady at the head of a household; but I think she may have marred the expectations of some who desired to reach that eminence. She early captivated the heart of Mr. Maynwaring. He was a bachelor, rich, connected with the government, and a hard drinker, according to the prevailing fashion. He was Cymon subdued by Iphigenia. He loved the lady's refinement, and she kept his household as carefully as if she had been his wife, and presided at his table with a grace that charmed him. There was something of Beauty and the Beast in this connection, but the animal was never converted to an Azor, and a marriage with Zemira was the one thing wanting. When Maynwaring died, society almost looked upon Mrs. Oldfield as an honest widow. Indeed, it had never rejected her. The standard of morals was low, and when the *quasi* widow accepted the proposal

of General Churchill to place her at the head of his establishment, as she had been in that of Mr. Maynwaring, no one blamed her. Marriage, indeed, seems to have been thought of, and Queen Caroline, who did not at all disdain to stoop to little matters of gossip, one day remarked to Mrs. Oldfield, who had been reading to a court circle, "I hear, Mrs. Oldfield, that you and the General are married?" "Madam," said the actress, playing her very best, "the General keeps his own secrets!" General Churchill is the Colonel Ranter of the *Tatler*, who never spoke without an oath until he saw the *Lady Betty Modish!* To the latter, the Duke of Bedford offered more brilliant advantages than the General or the Squire; but the disinterested actress spurned them, and kept sisterhood with Duchesses. She was to be seen on the terrace at Windsor, walking with the consorts of dukes, and with countesses, and wives of English barons, and the whole gay group might be heard calling one another by their Christian names. In later days, Kitty Clive called such fine folk "damaged quality;" and later still, the second Mrs. Barry did not value such companionship at a "pin's fee;" but Anne Oldfield drew from it many an illustration, which she transported to the stage. During her last season, her sufferings were often so acute that when the applause was loudest, the poor actress turned aside to hide the tears forced from her by pain. She never gave up till the agony was too great to be endured, and then she refused to receive a salary which, according to her articles, was not to be discontinued in illness. She lingered a few months in her house in Lower Grosvenor Street; the details of her last moments, as given by Pope, mingle a little truth with much error and exaggeration:—

> "'Odious! in woollen? 'twould a saint provoke!'
> Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke.
> 'No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace
> Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face;
> One would not sure be frightful when one's dead.
> And Betty, give this cheek a little red!'"

Betty was the ex-actress, Mrs. Saunders, who resided with Narcissa. She had quitted the stage in 1720, and, says Mr. Urban, "attended Mrs. Oldfield constantly, and did the office of priest to the last." Poor Narcissa, after death, was attired in a Holland night-dress, with tucker and double ruffles of Brussels lace, of which latter material she also wore a head-dress, and a pair of "new kid gloves." This, another writer calls being "buried

in *full dress*." The report seems to have been founded on Mrs. Oldfield's natural good taste in costume. Flavia, such is her name in the *Tatler*, "is ever well drest, and always the genteelest woman you meet; her clothes are so exactly fitted that they appear part of her person" * The deceased actress received such honour as actress never received before, nor has ever received since. The lady lay in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, a distinction not unfrequently, indeed, conceded to persons of high rank and small merit, but which, nevertheless, seemed out of place in the case of Anne Oldfield; but had she been really a queen, the public could not have thronged more eagerly to the spectacle. After the lying in state, there was a funeral of as much ceremony as has been observed at the obsequies of many a queen. Among the supporters of the pall were Lord Hervey, Lord Delawarr, and Bubb Dodington, afterwards Lord Melcombe. The first used to ride abroad with Mrs. Oldfield. Lord Delawarr was a soldier who became a great "beau," and went a philandering. There were anthems, and prayers, and sermon; and Dr. Parker, who officiated, remarked, when all was over, to a few particular friends, and with some equivocation, as it seems to me, that he "buried her very willingly, and with much satisfaction." Her sons Maynwaring and Churchill were present, and contemporary notices say that she had no other children. Her friends were apt to express a different opinion; and Mrs. Delaney, in one of the very first passages in her *Autobiography* says that among her own school-fellows, was Miss Dye Bertie, a daughter of Mrs. Oldfield the actress, who, after leaving school, was the *pink of fashion* in the beau monde, and married a nobleman. This daughter is not mentioned in Mrs. Oldfield's will; but to the two sons Mrs. Oldfield bequeathed the bulk of a fortune which she had amassed more by her exertions than by the generosity of their respective fathers. She was liberal, too, in leaving memorials to numerous friends; less so in her bequests to old relations of her sempstress and coffee-house days. A very small annuity was Narcissa's parting gift to the mother who long survived her. In such wise went her money; but whither has the blood of Oldfield gone? Her son, Colonel Churchill, married a natural daughter of Sir Robert, and *their* daughter Mary married, in 1777, Charles Sloane, first Earl of Cadogan. She was his second wife, and the marriage was dissolved in 1797. Of their children, Emily married Gerard

* This is by some, supposed to apply to Miss Osborne, afterwards the wife of Bishop Atterbury.

Wellesley, and Charlotte Sir Henry Wellesley, brothers of the Duke of Wellington. Charlotte's marriage was dissolved, and she married the Marquis of Anglesea. Charlotte's son by Sir Henry is now Lord Cowley, our ambassador in France, and he, and her children by the Marquis of Anglesea, among them Lords Clarence and Alfred Paget, are the great, great, grandchildren of Anne Oldfield. George, Earl Cadogan, son of Mary Churchill, and the first Earl, died 1864, and was succeeded by his son Henry, by whose marriage (1836) with Mary 3rd daughter of Gerard and Emily Wellesley, the Oldfield blood has been increased in the Cadogan line.

Her best epitaph tells the reader that she lies amid great poets (not less worthy of praise than they) whose works she illustrated and ennobled. It records the apt universality of her talent, which made her seem born for whatever she undertook. In tragedy, the glory of her form, the dignity of her countenance, the majesty of her walk, touched the rudest spectator. In comedy, her power, her graceful hilarity, her singular felicity, were so irresistible, that the eyes never wearied of gazing at her, nor the hands of applauding her. Among the last words she uttered in her last original part, Sophonisba, when mortal illness was upon her, were these:—

> "And is the sacred moment then so near,
> The moment when yon sun, these heavens, this earth
> Shall sink at once, and straight another state,
> New scenes, new joys, new faculties, new wonders,
> Rise, on a sudden, round?"

In this character, Thomson says, "She excelled what even in the fondness of an author, I could either wish or imagine. The grace, dignity, and happy variety of her action, have been universally applauded and are truly admirable." On the 23rd of October, 1730, she died, in her forty-seventh year. A week later, Dr. Parker "buried her, (as he says) very willingly, and with much satisfaction!"

CHAPTER XIX.

FROM THE DEATH OF ANNE OLDFIELD TO THAT OF WILKS.

Between the season of 1729-30, and that of 1733-4, the stage "declined."

While the stage failed in players, it was not upheld by the poets. The gentlemen of the inns of court hissed Charles Johnson's "Medea." The "Eurydice," of Mallet, was found to be as hard and as dry as granite. Jeffreys' "Merope" had no success. "Who could believe," says Voltaire, "that love could have been introduced into such a story?" Tracy's classical "Periander" failed: but it was not because our ancestors were weary of classical tragedies, that a short, fat, one-eyed, and well-to-do dissenter and jeweller, of Moorgate Street, reaped such a triumph, with his modern and domestic tragedy,—"George Barnwell." *Mr.* Lillo had previously written a ballad-opera, "Sylvia;" but now he aimed to show the hideousness and consequence of vice. "George Barnwell" was first acted at Drury Lane, at the beginning of the Midsummer holidays of 1731. Theophilus Cibber played the hero; Mrs. Butler, Milwood. The audience looked for fun, and there was the flutter of a thousand copies of the old ballad in the house, to compare it with the play. Pope was present, and expressed an opinion that the language was often too elevated for the personages; but the hearers thought only of the story, as illustrated by Lillo, and every eye was weeping. It was an honest attempt made to amend, from the stage, the vices and weaknesses of mankind; and it, in some degree, succeeded. It enlisted the sympathies of honest women. "The distresses of great personages," says a lady, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, "have ceased to affect the town," and "none but a prostitute could find fault with this tragedy." Fault, however, was found; but the objection was answered in this way;—that "lowness of

action was disallowed in a tragedy, but not lowness of character: the *circumstances* here are all important." One critic holds the story to be improbable; but contemporary journals furnish parallels. "George Barnwell" brought domestic tragedy into fashion, and Charles Johnson closed his dramatic career with the unsuccessful "Cœlia, or the perjured Lover," as a warning to young ladies. Avarice was attacked, in Goodman's Fields, by Fielding. He had not yet struck upon the vein which made him the first and most philosophical of English novelists; but he rose from his squibs and farces to the achievement of the "Miser," an adaptation, but by a master hand, and with a double result of triumph,—to the author, and to Griffin, who played Lovegold. For further edification, the pantomimic "*Harlot's Progress*," was got up by Theophilus Cibber at Drury Lane, where it was preceded by "George Barnwell," and made an evening there as edifying to both sexes as going to church.

Among rising players, I find Macklin quietly playing any little part given him at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and securing his firm standing ground by the ability with which he acquitted himself at that house, when, in 1731, he was suddenly called upon to play Brazencourt, in Fielding's "Coffee House Politicians." He had only four lines to speak; but those he spoke so well, that the true actor was at once discerned. One may fancy the tone and manner in which the rascal exclaimed:—"I was forced to turn her off for stealing four of my shirts, two pair of stockings, and my Common Prayer Book." Macklin was the last of the great actors who played at Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Rich had gained enough to enable him to build a new house, in Covent Garden.

There had been a long expressed desire for a new theatre, and a new system. In a prospectus it was stated that actors and authors should be excluded from the management, which was to be entrusted to individuals, who, at least, knew as little about it; namely, men of quality, taste, figure, and of a fortune varying from ten to twelve hundred pounds! A committee was to be appointed, whose duty it would be, among others, to provide for the efficient reading of new plays, and for their being listened to with reverence and attention. It was calculated that the annual profit of such a theatre would amount to £3,000 a year, and that out of it an annuity of £100 might be set aside for every author who had achieved a certain amount of success! In the following year, the *Weekly Miscellany* and the *Grub Street Journal* were

very eager on the subject of theatrical reform. The former complained that high comedy and dignified tragedy had deserted the stage; remarked that plays were not intended for tradesmen! and denounced pantomimes and harlequinades as infamous. Old Exeter Change was then to let, and the Journal proposed that it should be converted into a theatre; adding a suggestion, that a college should be founded for decayed actors. This college was to form the two wings of the theatre; which wings were to be inhabited respectively by the *emeriti* among the actors, and destitute actresses, whose new home was to be within the sound of the stirring echoes of their joyous days. The direction of the establishment was to be confided to a competent governor and officers selected from among the decayed nobility and gentry; and the glory and profit resulting were calculated at a very high figure indeed! On one result the *Grub Street* congratulated itself with unctuous pride. If the stage were reformed, the universities and inns of court would supply actors. *Gentlemen*, said the *Grub Street*, with some arrogance, were reluctant to go among the scamps on the stage. Then, as for actresses, *Grub* rudely declared that every charity school could supply a dozen wenches of more decent education and character, of better health, brighter youth, more brilliant beauty, and more exalted genius, than the common run of hussies then on the stage; and a season's training, he added, would qualify them for business! This was a hard hit at men, among whom there were many well born; and at women, who, whatever they lacked, possessed the happy gifts of health, youth, beauty, and genius; but *Grub Street's* cynicism was probably founded on the fact, that he was not invited by the men, nor smiled on by the women.

Covent Garden Theatre was opened on the 7th of December, 1732, The first piece acted was Congreve's "Way of the World;" Fainall by Quin. Rich produced Gay's operatic piece "Achilles," which represented the hero when disguised as a girl. By the treatment of the subject, Gay did not manifest the innocency to which he laid claim, nor show himself either in wit a man, or in simplicity a child. A week before Gay died, he gave this piece to the theatre, negotiating, "to the utmost advantage for his relations," says Swift. "The play Mr. Gay left succeeds very well," writes Pope, "It is another original in its kind." Generally, the novelties were failures. Quin's most brilliant days lay between this period and the ripening into manhood of Garrick. Before we accompany him through that time of triumph, let us look back at the career of Wilks.

CHAPTER XX.

ROBERT WILKS.

In Mr. Secretary Southwell's office, in Dublin, there sits the young son of one of the Pursuivants of the Lord Lieutenant; he is not writing a *precis*, he is copying out the parts of a play to be acted in private. His name is Robert Wilks, and the wise folk of Rathfarnham, near Dublin, where he was born in 1665, shake their heads and declare that he will come to no good. The prophecy seemed fulfilled when the Irish wars between James and William forced him, an unwilling volunteer, into the army of the latter. As clerk to the camp he is exempt from military duty; but he tells a good story, sings a good song, and the officers take him for a very pretty fellow. Anon, he is back in the old Dublin office. At all stray leisure hours he may, however, be seen fraternising with the actors. He most affects one Richards; he hears Richards repeat his parts, and he speaks the intervening sentences of the other characters. This he does with such effect, that Richards swears he is made for an actor, and the young Government clerk, fired by the fame of Betterton, is eager to leap from the stool, which his father considered the basis of his fortune, and to don sock and buskin. His old comrades of the camp were then about to vary the monotony of life at the Castle, by getting up a play to inaugurate the new theatre, re-opened at the restoration of peace. Judicious Ashbury was the only professional player. Young Wilks had privately acted with him as the Colonel in the "Spanish Friar." Ashbury now offered to play Iago to his Othello, and the officers were glad to meet again with their old clerk of the camp. The tragedy was acted accordingly. "How were you pleased?" asked Richards, who thought Wilks took it as a pastime. "I was pleased with all but myself," answered the Government clerk, who was thoroughly in earnest. Wilks had

gone through many months of probation, watched by Ashbury and Richards, when one morning the latter called on the young actor, with an introductory letter to Betterton in his hand. Wilks accepted the missive with alacrity, bade farewell to secretaries and managers, and in a brief space of time was sailing over the waters, from the Pigeon House to Parkgate.

The meeting of Wilks and Betterton, in the graceful costume of those days, the young actor travel-worn, a little shabby, anxious, and full of awe; the elder richly attired, kind in manner, his face bright with intellect, and his figure heightened by the dignity of a lofty nature and professional triumph, borne with a lofty modesty, is another subject for a painter. Betterton instructed the stranger as to the course he should take, and, accordingly, one bright May morning of 1690, a handsome young fellow, with a slight Irish accent, presented himself to Christopher Rich, as a light comedian. He was a native of Dublin county, he said, had left a promising Government clerkship, to try his fortune on the Irish stage; and, tempted by the renown of Betterton, had come to London to see the great actor, and to be engaged, if that were possible, in the same company. Christopher Rich thought there was something like promise of excellence in the easy and gentleman-like young fellow; and he consented to engage him for Drury Lane, at the encouraging salary of fifteen shillings a week, from which half-a-crown was to be deducted for instruction in dancing! This left Wilks thirteen and sixpence clear weekly income; and he had not long been enjoying it, when he married Miss Knapton, daughter of the Town Clerk of Southampton. Young couple never began life upon more modest means; but happiness, hard work, and good fortune came of it.

For a few years, commencing with 1690, Wilks laboured unnoticed, by all save generous Betterton, who, seeing the young actor struggling for fame, with a small salary and an increasing family, recommended him to return to Ashbury, the Dublin manager, who, at Betterton's word, engaged him at £50 a year, and a clear benefit. "You will be glad to have got him," said Betterton to Ashbury. "You will be sorry you have lost him," said he, to Christopher Rich. *Sorry!* In three or four years more, Rich was imploring him to return, and offering him Golconda, as salaries were then understood. But Wilks was now the darling of the Dublin people, and, at a later period, so universal was the desire to keep him amongst them, that the Duke of Ormond, Lord Lieutenant, issued a warrant to prohibit his leaving

the kingdom. But, on the other hand, £4 per week awaited him in London. It was nearly as high a salary as Betterton's! Wilks, however, caring less for the terms than for the opportunity of satisfying his thirst for fame, contrived to escape, with his wife. With them came a disappointed actor, soon to be a popular dramatist, Farquhar; who, in the year 1699, after opening the season with his "Love and a Bottle," produced his "Constant Couple," with Wilks as Sir Harry Wildair. On the night of Wilks's first appearance, in some lines written for him by Farquhar, and spoke by the *debûtant*, the latter, confessing a sort of supremacy in the London over the *Dublin* stage, said :—

> "There I could please, but there my fame must end,
> For hither none must come to boast—but mend."

This the young actor did, apace. Applauded as the latter had been the year before, in old parts, the approbation was as nothing compared with that lavished on him in this his first original character. From the first recognition of Vizard down to the "tag" with which the curtain descends, and including even the absurd and unnatural scene with Angelica, he kept the audience in a condition of intermittent ecstacy. The piece established his fame. It seems to have been played nearly fifty times in the first season. In its construction and style it is in advance of the comedies of Aphra Behn and Ravenscroft; and yet it is irregular; not moral; as often flippant as witty; improbable, and not really original. Madam Fickle is to be traced in it, and the denouement, as far as Lurewell and Standard are concerned, is borrowed from those of Plautus and Terence.

Wilks justified all Betterton's prognostications. Like Betterton, he was, to the end, convinced that he might become more perfect by study and perseverance. Wilks was careful, judicious, painstaking in the smallest trifles; in comedy always brilliant, in tragedy always graceful and natural. For zeal, Cibber had not known his equal for half-a-century; careful himself, he allowed no one else to be negligent; *so* careful, that he would recite a thousand lines without missing a single word. The result of all his labour was seen in an ease, and grace, and gaiety which seemed perfectly spontaneous. His taste in dress was irreproachable; grave in his attire in the streets, on the stage he was the glass of fashion. On that stage, even in his last season, after a career of forty years, he never lost his buoyancy, or his young

graces. From first to last he was perfection in his peculiar line. "Whatever he did upon the stage," says an eminent critic, quoted by Genest, "let it be ever so trifling, whether it consisted in putting on his gloves, or taking out his watch, lolling on his cane, or taking snuff, every movement was marked by such an ease of breeding and manner, everything told so strongly the involuntary motion of a gentleman, that it was impossible to consider the character he represented in any other light than that of reality; but what was still more surprising, that person who could thus delight an audience, from the gaiety and sprightliness of his character, I met the next day in a street, hobbling to a hackney-coach, seemingly so enfeebled by age and infirmities, that I could scarcely believe him to be the same man."

The grace and bearing of Wilks were accounted of as natural in a man whose blood was not of the common tap. His father was descended from Judge Wilks, an eminent lawyer, and a gentleman. During the civil wars he raised a troop of horse, at his own expense, for the King's service. A brother of the Judge was in Monk's army, with the rank of Colonel, and with more of honest intention than of common-place discretion. The civil wars took many a good actor from the stage, but they also contributed the sons and daughters of many ancient but impoverished families to the foremost rank among distinguished players. Some of the daughters of these old and decayed houses thought it no disparagement to wed with these players, or to take humble office in the theatre.

Wilks's first wife, Miss Knapton, was the daughter of the Town Clerk of Southampton, and Steward of the New Forest, posts of trust, and, at one time, of emolument. The Knaptons had been Yorkshire landholders, the estate being valued at £2,000 a year; and now we find one daughter marrying Wilks, a second, espousing "Jubilee Dicky," and a third, Anne Knapton, filling the humble office of dresser at Drury Lane, and probably not much flattered by the legend on the family arms, "Meta coronat opus."

The greatest trouble to Wilks during his management, arose from the "ladies" There was Mrs. Rogers, who, on the retirement of Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle, played the principal serious parts. It was her whim to act none but virtuous characters. In the epilogue to the "Triumphs of Virtue," she pronounced with effect the lines, addressed to the ladies:—

> "At your own virtue's shrine my vows I'll pay,
> And strive to live the character I play."

In this she did not succeed; but Mrs. Rogers congratulated herself by considering that her failure saved Wilks's life, who, when a widower, protested that he should die of despair if she refused to smile upon him; but, as Cibber remarks, Mrs. Rogers "could never be *reduced* to marry." When Mrs. Verbruggen died, in giving birth to an infant, Mrs. Rogers aspired to the succession of her parts. Wilks preferred Mrs. Oldfield. A clamour ensued; but, says Victor, "Mr. Wilks soon reduced this clamour to demonstration, by an experiment of Mrs. Oldfield and Mrs. Rogers playing the same part, that of Lady Lurewell in the "Trip to the Jubilee." "I am," adds the writer, "convinced that Mr. Wilks had no other regard for Mrs. Oldfield but what arose from the excellency of her performances." When Mrs. Oldfield was cast for Andromache, Mrs. Rogers "raised a posse of profligates, fond of tumult and riot, who made such a commotion in the house, that the Court hearing of it, sent four of the royal messengers and a strong guard to suppress all disorder." Mrs Rogers never forgave Wilks; and when she played a love scene with him, she seldom failed, by hugging him closely, to pinch or scratch him with considerable severity.

Wilks could be as modest as he was generous. After playing, for the first time, the Ghost to Booth's Hamlet, the latter remarked,—"Why, Bob, I thought you were going to knock me down. When I played the Ghost to Mr. Betterton's Hamlet, awe-stricken as he seemed, I was still more so of him." "Mr. Betterton and Mr. Booth," said Wilks,—"noble actors, could always play as they pleased. I can only play to the best of my ability." A writer in the *Prompter*, however, says that Booth would have been too solemn for the lighter parts of Hamlet, "if he had ever played the character." Wilks's Hamlet was good only in the light and gayer portions, and in the scene in which at Ophelia's feet, Hamlet watches the King, Wilks's reading was perfection. In, "I say away!—Go on; I'll follow thee!" he addressed the whole line to the Ghost, with a flourish of his sword; whereas, the first three words should be spoken to the two friends who struggle to keep him from following the apparition.

Occasionally, Wilks and Booth were at odds, about parts. Each was willing to act any character in any piece; Booth "for his part, saw no such great matter in acting every day, for he believed it the wholesomest exercise in the world; it kept the spirits in motion, and always gave *him* a good stomach." Mrs. Oldfield, laughing behind her fan, and talking with her usual frank-

ness, used to call the disputants "fools," and straightway reconcile them.

Irascible as Wilks was, he was more remarkable for his zeal and industry, for the carefulness with which he superintended rehearsals, and for the pains-concealing labour, which distinguished him on the public stage. Cibber generously confesses: "Had *I* had half his application I still think I might have shown myself twice the actor that, in my highest state of favour, I appeared to be." In forty years Wilks was never once forgetful of a single word in any of his characters. "In some new comedy he happened to complain of a crabbed speech in his part which, he said, gave him more trouble to study than all the rest of it had done." The author cut the whole of the speech out; but "Wilks thought it such an indignity to his memory that anything should be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himself perfect in that speech, though he knew it was never to be made use of." Cibber praises his sober character, but hints at his professional conceit, and somewhat overbearing temper; and he calls him "bustle master-general of the company." "To be employed on the stage was the delight of his life." Nothing came amiss to Wilks. He even undertook the office of writing the bills of performance; but he charged £50 a year for the trouble.

In the plaintive and tender, this light comedian excelled even Booth, who used to say that Wilks lacked ear and not voice to make a great tragedian. He was not altogether original; for the *Tatler*, in 1710, advises him to "wholly forget Mr. Betterton, for that he failed in no part of Othello but when he has him in view." Thomson says of him, as the hero in Sophonisba, "Whatever was designed as amiable and engaging in Masinissa, shines out in Mr. Wilks's action." Wilks's greatest successes were in his friend Farquhar's heroes,—Sir Harry Wildair, Mirabel, Captain Plume, and Archer. He played equally well the light gentlemen of Cibber's comedies. In Don Felix, in Mrs Centlivre's "Wonder," he almost excelled the reputation he had gained in Sir Harry. "When Wilks dies," Farquhar once remarked, "Sir Harry may go to the Jubilee." So identified was he with this part, the *Tatler* said, "Whatever Wilks, who is the strictest follower of nature, is acting, the vulgar spectators turn their thoughts upon Sir Harry Wildair." Wilks himself looked to Pope for a tragic character. "Every one wonders," says Cromwell to Pope, Dec. 7, 1711, "that a genius like yours will not support the sinking drama, and Mr. Wilks, tho' I think his talent is comedy, has express'd a furious

ambition to swell in your buskins." He was the original representative of some fourscore parts; among them was Dumont, in "Jane Shore," for which he may be said to have been cast by Mrs. Oldfield. "Nay!" she cried to him, in her pretty way; "if you will not be my husband, I will act Alicia, I protest." Wilks had a nephew, who was in an attorney's office. The young fellow had a madness for appearing on the stage. No counsel availed against his resolution; and, in 1714, Wilks despatched him to Dublin, with a letter to Ashbury. "I have refused to give him any countenance, in hopes that time and experience might cure him; but since I find him determined to make an attempt, somewhere, no one, I am sure, is able to give him so just a notion of the business as yourself. If you find my nephew wants either genius or any other necessary qualification, I beg you will freely tell him his disabilities; and then it is possible he may be more easily persuaded to return to his friends and business, which I am informed he understands perfectly well." Young Wilks proved a poor actor, and died at the age of thirty, having never obtained above that number of shillings a week.

Wilks, with all his love of home, was a fine gentleman. His appreciation of matrimony was shown by the haste with which he espoused the widow Fell, daughter of Charles II.'s great gun-founder, Browne, in April, 1715, after losing his first wife in the previous year. During the first union, he must have trod the stage with many a heart-ache, while he was exciting hilarity, for eleven of his children died early, and the airy player was for ever in mourning. His step-son, Fell, married the grand-daughter of William Penn, and brought his bride to the altar of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, not to be married, but christened. Wilks and his wife were the gossips to the pretty quakeress; and the former, probably, never looked more imposing than when he pronounced the names of the fair episcopalian,—*Gulielma Maria*. At his town-house, and at his villa at Isleworth, he kept a well-regulated and cheerful home. He had there seen so much of death, that, we are told, he was always prepared to meet it with decency. His generosity amounted almost to prodigality. "Few Irish gentlemen," says his biographer, "are without indigent relatives." Wilks had many, and they never appealed to him in vain. He died, after a short illness, and four doctors, in September, 1732, leaving his share in the Drury Lane Patent, and what other property he possessed, to his wife. Throughout his life, I can only find one symptom of regret at having abandoned the Irish Secre-

tary's office for the stage. "My successor in Ireland," he once said to Cibber, "made by his post £50,000." 'The death of Wilks,' writes Pope, 'leaves Cibber without a colleague, absolute and perpetual dictator of the stage, though, indeed, while he lived he was but Bibulus to a Cæsar.' Farquhar, when near the end of his career, in 1707, wrote this laconic note to Wilks:—"Dear Bob,—I have not anything to leave to thee, to perpetuate my memory, but two helpless girls; look upon them, sometimes; and think of him that was, to the last moment of his life,—GEORGE FARQUHAR." Wilks did not disappoint Farquhar's expectations, but the poet's girls went down in life; one married "a low tradesman," the other became a servant; and the mother died in poverty. Once only do I find Wilks in close connection with royalty,—namely, when he took, by command, the manuscript of "George Barnwell" to St. James's, and read that lively tragedy to Queen Caroline. On some like occasion, King William once presented Booth with five pounds for his reward, but history does not note the guerdon with which Wilks retired from the presence of Caroline Dorothea.

CHAPTER XXI.

ENTER, GARRICK.

Great was the confusion in, and small the prosperity of, the theatres after the death of Wilks, and withdrawal of Cibber. Highmore, now chief patentee, opened Drury; but Theophilus Cibber, with the principal Drury Lane performers, except Mrs. Clive (for Miss Rafter was now the wife of Judge Clive's brother), and some others, opened the Haymarket against him, under the title of "Comedians of His Majesty's Revels." In the Drury Lane company, Mrs. Clive furnished perpetual sunshine, and Mrs. Horton warmed the thin houses by the glow of her beauty. On the first night, the seceders opened the Haymarket, 21st September, 1733, with "Love for Love;" Mrs. Pritchard played Nell, in the after-piece ("Devil to Pay"). The *Daily Post* had already extolled the "dawning excellence" she had exhibited in a booth, and prophesied that she would charm the age. She played light comic parts throughout the season; but her powers as a tragedian do not seem to have been suspected. Cibber's daughter, Mrs. Charke, played a round of male parts during the same season In the March of 1734, the seceders closed the Haymarket, and joined the wreck of the old company at Drury Lane. There, appeared Miss Arne, whose voice charmed all hearers, whose beauty subdued Theophilus Cibber, but who was not yet recognised as the tragic actress, between whom and Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Yates, critics, and the town generally, were to go mad with disputation.

Meantime, at Covent Garden, Quin rose to such eminence that we may look back at his career. His father was a barrister, of good Irish family, and resided in King Street, Covent Garden, where James was born, in 1693. Mrs. Quin was the wife of two husbands. The first, who had abandoned her, and was supposed

to be dead, re-appeared after Quin's birth, and carried off the boy's mother as his lawful wife. Thereby, the boy was deprived of the Quin property; and at the age of twenty-one, the young man, intelligent but uneducated, his illusions all dissipated, and being specially fitted for no vocation, went at once upon the stage. His time of probation was spent on the Dublin boards, in 1714, where he played small parts with such propriety, that in the following year he was received as a probationer into the company then acting at Drury Lane. The young actor was among noble professors, but he only acted "general utility," till one night, in 1716, when the run of the revived "Tamerlane" was threatened with interruption by the illness of Mills,—most ferocious of Bajazets,—Quin was induced to read the part. In doing this with judgment, he received such approval, that he made himself master of the words by the following night, and when the curtain fell, found himself famous. The critics acknowledged his merits; and Mr. Mills paid him the compliment of speedily getting well. Quin then sank to the *Dervise;* and in the succeeding season he passed over to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where, before the close of the season 1718-19, the chivalry of his Hotspur, the bluntness of his Clytus, the fire of his Bajazet, the dignity of his Brutus, the unctuousness of his Falstaff, the duplicity of his Maskwell, and the coarse comedy of his Sir John Brute, were circumstances of which the town talked eagerly It was Quin's success that really cost Bowen his life. Bowen (at a tavern) taunted Quin with being tame in Bajazet, and Quin retorted by speaking disparagingly of Bowen's Jacomo, in the "Libertine," preferring Johnson in that part. The quarrel was aggravated by politics. Bowen boasted of his loyalty, at which Quin remarked, that Bowen had often drunk the Duke of Ormond's health. The disputants parted angrily, to meet, on the invitation of Bowen. They passed from one tavern to another, till they could find a room which suited Bowen's purpose of "fighting it out." When they entered the room Bowen fastened the door, clapped his back to it, drew his sword, and threatened to run Quin through the body, if he did not out with his rapier, and defend himself. The latter drew, simply to keep Bowen off. But Bowen impetuously pressed forward till he fell, mortally wounded. Before his death, which occurred within three days, he took the blame of the transaction upon himself. This, with corroborative evidence, secured the acquittal of Quin, on his trial for manslaughter. Quin passed again to Drury Lane, tempted by the annual £500 offered by Fleetwood, who had pur-

chased the chief share in the patent. "No actor," said Rich, "is worth more than £300 a year," and declined to retain Quin at the additional required outlay. Mrs. Clive, Mrs. Horton, Mrs. Pritchard, Macklin and Ryan, progressed in favour; and Mrs. Cibber, the second wife of Theophilus, first took ground as an actress this season, at Drury Lane, in Aaron Hill's adaptation of Voltaire's "Zara." Milward played Lusignan, a part in acting which a young actor, named Bond, overcome by his feelings, died on the stage, while blessing his children.

The success of Mrs. Cibber stirred Rich at Covent Garden, and when she acted Hermione, old Mrs. Porter played the part against her, as she also did Zara. Mrs. Horton was opposed to her in Jane Shore. In high comedy, Mrs. Cibber attempted Indiana, in the "Conscious Lovers," and forthwith Covent Garden put up the same piece.

The Haymarket was open in the spring and summer of 1736, under Fielding, who found the town in laughter; while Lillo drowned it in tears. "At "Pasquin," that hard-hitting, mirth-moving, satire, London "screamed," for two months; and at the "Fatal Curiosity," that heart-rending domestic drama, the same London wept as if it had the tenderest feelings in the world.

Quin now became eminent in Shakspeare's characters, Mrs. Cibber, stirred the town as Statira, Monimia, or Belvidera, and Mrs. Clive—who had quarrelled with her as to the right to play Polly—beamed like sunshine through operatic farce and rattling comedy.

Drury gained this season a new author, in Dodsley, whose life is comprised in the words, footman, poet, bookseller, honest man. As yet, he is only a poor poet; when he published books instead of writing them, he became a wealthy fellow. In his "Toy Shop," and in his "King and the Miller of Mansfield," Dodsley gave wholesome food to satisfy the public appetite; and the man who had not long before stripped off a livery, showed more respect for decency than any gallant of them all. He was the only successful author of the season at Drury

A revival of Shakspeare's "King John," in which Delane played the King, and Walker, Falconbridge,—a character for which he was personally and intellectually fitted, and in which, as in Hotspur, he gained more laurels, than he acquired by his Macheath, attracted the public to Covent Garden. "King Charles I.," a tragedy by Havard, a young actor, drew the same public to Giffard's theatre. Chesterfield said, that "the catas-

trophe was too recent, too melancholy, and of too solemn a nature to be heard of anywhere, but in the pulpit." This tragedy was composed to order, and under constraint; Giffard locked up the poet in a garret during a number of hours, daily, from which he was not suffered to emerge till he had repeated, from behind the door, to Giffard, a certain number of newly-written lines,—till the whole was completed; when the poet became free.

The political allusions in Fielding's burlesques now began to make statesmen wince. The government had for some time contemplated a restriction of the licence of the stage. Hitherto, the Lord Chamberlain could stop a play in its career. It was now proposed to establish a licenser, according to whose report the Chamberlain might prohibit the play from entering on a career at all. The bill for gagging the stage was hurried through the Commons and tossed to the Lords, at the close of the session of 1737. There it met the sturdy opposition of Chesterfield, who described it as an attempt, through restraining the licence of the stage, to destroy the liberty of the press; for what was seditious to act, it would be seditious to print. And if the printing of a play could be stopped, there would soon be a gag on pamphlets and other works. He thought the existing laws could be applied against the players if they offended. But those laws were not applied, or Mr. Fielding would have been punished for his "Pasquin," wherein the three great professions—religion, physic and law—were represented as inconsistent with common sense. If ministers dreaded satire or censure, all they had to do, was not to deserve it. If they deserved it, it would be as easy to turn passages of old plays against them, as to make them, in new. False accusations could be lightly made. Molière complained, that "Tartuffe" was prohibited on the ground of its ridiculing religion, which was done nightly on the Italian stage; whereas he only satirised hypocrites. Chesterfield told the Lords, that they had no right to put an excise upon wit; and said, finely, "Wit, my Lords, is the property of those who have it,—and too often the only property they have to depend on. It is, indeed, but a precarious dependence. Thank God!" he said, "we, my Lords, *have a dependence of another kind!*"

The government made use of its authority, by prohibiting plays; and the public took their revenge, by hissing all those that were licensed! Thomson was fortunate in saving his "Agamemnon" from the censors, for it is not unworthy of ranking with the "Iphigenia" of Racine. Mallet was still more lucky

with his "Mustapha." "The pit, before five o'clock," says a critic, "was filled with gentlemen, who made a very polite appearance, and were mostly of the Scots' nation, the author having been some time a domestic of His Grace the Duke of Montrose. Some opposition was intended, but the political allusions compensated for want of poetical beauty." The audience were too pleased to hiss a piece, the licensers of which were too dull to perceive that Sultan Solyman and his vizier, Rustan, were stage portraits of George II. and Sir Robert Walpole. There were licensed dramas hissed, but there was many a gay little piece produced, at which honest laughter took place of sibillation, and which rode riotously triumphant through seasons which were otherwise remarkable for revivals of Shakspeare's plays, according to the original text; and not less so for that of Milton's "Comus," in which graceful Mrs. Cibber played and sang the Lady, and sunny Kitty Clive gladdened every heart as Euphrosyne.

From the stage now disappeared Bowman, the best dressed old man at eighty-eight, and Miller (the celebrated Josiah or Joseph), whose merit in Irish characters is set down in his *not* having a brogue, which, at that period, was unintelligible to English ears. His career lasted from 1709 to 1738. He played a wide range of characters; and he married for the singular reason that, being unable to read the manuscript copy he had to get by heart, his wife might read it to, and beat it *into* him. He was the original John Moody, and was so honestly dull a man, that the wits thought it a good joke to ascribe all jests to him.* Stephen Duck supplied a rhymed eulogy for his tombstone, in 1738, which was re-cut on the stone in 1816; but the stone itself was broken up when the burial ground in Portugal Street was converted into a site for King's College Hospital. Other old names now cease to be heard of. When Mrs. Hallam passed away, the boards of old Drury were relieved from a load of fourteen stone weight!

Quin received a rude shock from Macklin, when the latter, after playing Roxana, in a burlesque of the "Rival Queens," achieved his first triumph, by taking Shylock from comedy, and playing it as a serious character. The managers were afraid of a riot. But the greatest success ensued, and Macklin took rank as one of the noble actors of his time. Mrs. Pritchard is now progressing. Walker has a rival in mellifluous Beard. Woodward and Yates

* Miller also played Teague, in the "Committee," a piece which, by a slip of the pen, at page 27, I have said was cut down to the farce of "Killing, no Murder," for which, read "Honest Thieves."

are rising to fame, and young Mrs. Cibber disappears for awhile from the stage, and from her married home, for ever. Colley Cibber now and then plays at £50 a night to crowded houses, but most so when he acts some of his old beaux and fops. His Richard did not so well please; and one night, when playing this character, he whispered to Victor, that he would give £50 to be in his easy chair again, by his fire-side. There was a Richard at hand who was likely to drive him there, and keep all others from the stage. Of course, the new actor was David Garrick.

CHAPTER XXII.

GARRICK, QUIN, MRS. PORTER.

GARRICK had selected the part of Richard III., for reasons which now appear singular. "He had often declared," says Davies, "he would never choose a character that was not suitable to his person; for, said he, if I should come forth in a hero, or in any part which is generally acted by a tall fellow, I shall not be offered a larger salary than 40*s.* a week. In this," adds the biographer, "he glanced at the follies of those managers who used to measure an actor's merits by his size." On the 19th of October, 1741, there was no very great nor excited audience at Goodman's Fields. The bill promised a concert, to begin at six o'clock; admission by tickets "at three, 2*s.* and 1*s.*" Between the two parts of the concert, it announced that the historical play of the "Life and Death of Richard III.," with the ballad-opera of "The Virgin Unmasked," would be "performed *gratis* by Persons for their Diversion." The part of King Richard, "by a gentleman who never appeared on any stage," is an announcement, not true to the letter; but the audience were not troubled therewith. From the moment the new actor appeared they saw a Richard and not an actor of that personage. Of the audience, he seemed unconscious, so thoroughly did he identify himself with the character. He surrendered himself to all its requirements, was ready for every phase of passion, every change of humour, and was as wonderful in quiet sarcasm as he was terrific in the hurricane of the battle-scenes. Above all, his audience were delighted with his "nature." Since Betterton's death, actors had fallen into a rythmical, mechanical, sing-song cadence. Garrick spoke not as an orator, but as King Richard himself might have spoken. The chuckling exultation of "So much for Buckingham!" was long

a tradition on the stage. His "points" occurred in rapid succession. The rage and rapidity with which he delivered

> "Cold friends to me! What do they in the North,
> When they should serve their sovereign in the West?"

made a wonderful impression on the audience. Hogarth has shown us how he *looked*, when starting from his dream; and critics tell us that his cry of "Give me another horse!" was the cry of a gallant man; but that it fell into one of distress as he said, "Bind up my wounds," while the "Have mercy, Heaven," was moaned on bended knee. The battle-scene and death excited the enthusiasm of an audience altogether unused to acting like this. And yet, for seven nights, the receipts averaged but about £30 a night; and Garrick only slowly made his way. Then, suddenly, the town was aroused. The western theatres were abandoned. "Mr. Garrick," says Davies, "drew after him the inhabitants of the most polite parts of the town. Goodman's Fields were full of the splendour of St. James's and Grosvenor Square. The coaches of the nobility filled up the space from Temple Bar to Whitechapel." Among these, even bishops might have been found. Pope came up from Twickenham, and without disparaging Betterton, as some old stagers were disposed to do, only "feared the young man would be spoiled, for he would have no competitor." Quin felt his laurels shaking on his brow, and declared that if this young man was right, he and all the old actors must be wrong. But Quin took courage. Dissent was a-foot, and he compared the attraction of Garrick to the attraction of Whitfield. The sheep would go astray. It would all come right by-and-bye. The people, he said, who go to chapel will soon come to church again.

Meanwhile let us trace the new actor through his only season in the east. From the 19th of October, 1741, to the 29th of May, 1742, Garrick acted more comic than tragic characters; of the latter he played Richard (eighteen times), Chamont, Lothario, the Ghost in "Hamlet" (Giffard, the manager, playing the Dane), Aboan, Lear, and Pierre. In comedy, he played Clodio, Fondlewife, Costar Pearmain, Witwoud, Bayes, Master Johnny ("School Boy"), Lord Foppington, Duretete, Captain Brazen, and two characters in farces, of which he was the original representative; Jack Smatter in "Pamela," and Sharp in the "Lying Valet" This is, at least, a singular selection! The most important of his comic essays was in the part of Bayes. His great scene was

at the rehearsal of the play, when he corrected the players, and gave imitations of contemporary actors. Garrick began with Delane, a comedian of merit. In taking him off, Garrick "retired to the upper part of the stage, and drawing his left arm across his breast, rested his right elbow upon it, raising a finger to his nose; he then came forward in a stately gait, nodding his head as he advanced, and in the exact tone of Delane, spoke the famous simile of the "Boar and the Sow." This imitation was enjoyed by no one more than by handsome Hale of Covent Garden. But when Hale recognised himself in the plaintive accents of a speech delivered without feeling, he was as disgusted as Giffard, who was so nettled by Garrick's close mimicry of *his* peculiarities that he challenged the mimic, fought with him, and wounded him in the sword-arm! Ryan, more wisely, let Garrick excite what mirth he might from the imitation of the hoarse and tremulous voice of the former. Quin was left untouched, salient as were his points, on the ground, according to Murphy, of Quin's excellence in characters suited to him.

From a salary of £1 a night, Garrick went up at once to half profits. The patent theatres remained empty when he played at Goodman's Fields, and accordingly the patentees threatening an application to the law, in support of their privileges, shut up the house, made terms with Giffard, and Garrick was brought over to Drury Lane, where his salary was speedily fixed at £600 per annum. His first appearance at Drury Lane was in May, 1742, when he played gratuitously (for the benefit of Harper's widow,) the part of Chamont, in the "Orphan." Mrs. Pritchard, whom a critic in the *Times* has described as of the Garrick school, was now so finished an actress, that she played Monimia to him. With Bayes, Lear and Richard, each part played once, he brought his preliminary performances at Drury to a close. In June, 1742, with Mrs. Woffington, he crossed to Dublin. During an unusually hot summer he drew such audiences that a distemper became epidemic among those who visited the ill-ventilated theatre, which proved fatal to many, and which received the distinction of being called the *Garrick fever!*

Of course, Garrick had not equally affected all the judges. Neither Gray nor Walpole allowed him to be the transcendant actor which the town generally held him to be. "Did I tell you about Mr. Garrick, that the town are horn-mad after?" writes Gray to Chute; "There are a dozen dukes of a night at Goodman's Fields, sometimes; and yet I am stiff in the opposition."

In May, 1742, Walpole writes in like strain to Mann:—"All the run is now after Garrick, a wine-merchant, who is turned player at Goodman's Fields. He plays all parts, and is a very good mimic. His acting I have seen, and may say to you, who will not tell it again here, I see nothing wonderful in it: but it is heresy to say so. The Duke of Argyll says he is superior to Betterton!" Old Lord Cobham was of the same opinion with the Duke; but they could only contrast Betterton in his decline, with Garrick in his young and vigorous manhood. When Louis XIV. signed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he lost 800,000 Protestant subjects, filled England with 50,000 able artizans, and gave David Garrick to the English stage! The grandfather of David was among the fugitives. That he prospered may be believed, since his son ultimately held a captain's commission in the English army. Captain Garrick married a lady named Clough, the daughter of a Litchfield vicar; and the most famous son of this marriage, David, was born at Hereford, his father's recruiting quarters, in February, 1716. His boyhood was passed at Litchfield, where he became more remarkable for his mania for acting than for application to school studies. At the age of eleven years, chief of a boyish company of players, he acted Kite, in the "Recruiting Officer," in which one of his sisters represented the Chambermaid, and to which Master Samuel Johnson refused to supply an introductory address. From Litchfield he made a trip to Lisbon, and therewith an attempt to fix himself in a vocation. His failure was no source of regret to himself. His uncle, a wine-merchant in the Portuguese capital, was not disposed to initiate the volatile lad into the mysteries of his craft, and David returned to Litchfield, with such increase of taste for the drama, that "several of his father's acquaintance," says Davies, "who knew the delight which he felt in the entertainment of the stage, often treated him with a journey to London, that he might feast his appetite at the playhouse." Booth was then stricken with the illness which killed him, and Garrick thus failed to study the greatest of actors since the era of Betterton. This ardent youth returned to Litchfield with more desire than ever to achieve fame and fortune on the stage. To supply what had been lacking in his education, he became the pupil of Samuel Johnson; but master and scholar soon wearied of it, and they together left Litchfield for London, Garrick with small means and great hopes, Johnson with means as small and his tragedy of "Irene."

The resources of David were speedily increased by the death of his uncle, who bequeathed him a thousand pounds, with the interest of which David paid the cost of instruction which he received from the Rev. Mr. Colson. Other opportunities failing, he joined with his brother Peter in the wine trade, in Durham Yard, where, said Foote, with his characteristic ill-nature, "Davy lived, with three quarts of vinegar in the cellar, calling himself a wine-merchant." Had the father of David been at home, instead of on service at Gibraltar, the latter would probably have been a Templar student; but Garrick hated the study of the law; yet, out of deference to his mother, the vicar's daughter, he refrained from appearing on the stage; but when both parents had passed away, Garrick, who had studied each living actor of mark, and even recorded his judgment of them, anonymously and honestly, in the public papers, left the stock in trade at Durham Yard to his brother In 1741, a young gentleman, calling himself Lyddell, made his first appearance on the stage, at Ipswich. He selected the part of Aboan, for two reasons: that it was a secondary character, and that Aboan was a "black." The attempt was successful, but not a triumph. David went into training. He played tragedy, high and low comedy, and even the glittering, active, and potent Harlequin. His career of a few months at Ipswich was as the preparatory canter of the high-mettled racer over the course. All who witnessed it, augured well of the young actor; and Giffard, the manager, agreed to bring Mr Lyddell, now Mr. Garrick, from the banks of the Orwell to the theatre in Goodman's Fields. In the season of 1742-3, Garrick acted about eighty nights,—Hamlet, thirteen times; Richard and Bayes, eleven; Archer, nine; Lear, six; Fondlewife and Hastings, four; Chamont, three; Plume, Clodio, and Pierre, twice; Abel Drugger, once; Wildair, created by him in Fielding's "Wedding Day," Lothario, Millamour, and Sharp, occasionally. Of *these* Wildair was a failure.

Quin played against him at Covent Garden, Richard, Chamont, Lear, and Pierre, but in these he proved no competitor. He fell back on his general repertory, and, among other characters, played Falstaff, Macbeth, Othello, and Brutus, none of which Garrick assumed this year. Garrick's Fondlewife, was opposed by that of Hippisley at Covent Garden, and that of Cibber, the younger, at Lincoln's Inn Fields. His Hamlet was encountered by that of Ryan, at Covent Garden, to Quin's Ghost; and a counter-attraction to his Lothario was set up in those of Ryan and of the silly

amateur, Highmore, the latter at Lincoln's Inn Fields. From all competition, Garrick came out triumphant. Of Lincoln's Inn Fields, this was the "positively final" season. Giffard managed the house with judgment, but he lost there some of the wealth which he had acquired at Goodman's Fields, and out of which he purchased the ground on which he built Coventry Court, near the Haymarket.

Covent Garden lost, this year, a great actress in Mrs. Porter. Among the most marked of her original representations were Hermione, Alicia, in "Jane Shore;" Leonora, in the "Revenge;" and Lady Grace, in the "Provoked Husband." Victor and Davies describe Mrs. Porter as the genuine successor of Mrs. Barry, to whom the former had long played the "confidantes" in tragedy. Mrs. Porter was tall and well made, of a fair complexion, but far from handsome; her voice, naturally tender, was by practice enlarged into sufficient force to fill the theatre, but there was a tremor in it to which nothing but custom could have reconciled the audience. She elevated herself above all personal defects by an exquisite judgment. In comedy, her acting was somewhat cold; but in those parts of tragedy where the passions predominate, she seemed to be inspired with an enthusiastic ardour which was capable of raising the coldest auditor to animation. She had a dignity in her mien, and a spirited propriety in all characters of rage; but when grief and tenderness possessed her, she subsided into the most affecting softness. Booth, who was no admirer of Mrs. Oldfield in tragedy, was in raptures with Mrs. Porter's Belvidera. Let us now return to the renewed struggles of the rival houses, made fiercer by the rise of a new actor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RIVALRY; AND ENTER, SPRANGER BARRY.

Under the mismanagement of Fleetwood, Drury Lane had fallen to a level with Sadlers Wells. Even after Garrick's accession, gross mismanagement continued, and drove the principal actors into open rebellion. Fleetwood dictated hard terms to most of them, except to Garrick, and he flatly refused to receive Macklin at all. This exclusion brought on a theatrical riot. The confederate actors had agreed to triumph or to fall together. To allow Macklin to be sacrificed to the resentment of Fleetwood, was a betrayal on their part, of the compact. Macklin appealed to the town, and Roscius would have been driven from the stage, but for Fleetwood's hired pugilists. In this season, 1743-4, Garrick did not appear till the 6th of December, when he acted Bayes. Between that night, and the close of the season, in May, he played seventy times. His most marked success was in Macbeth, in the tragedy "written by Shakspeare," when he had Mrs. Giffard for his Lady; he repeated this part thirteen times. Covent Garden opposed to him, first Quin, in Davenant's alteration of Shakspeare, and subsequently Sheridan, who on the 31st of March, 1744, made his first appearance, in opposition to Garrick, as Hamlet. The force of the two theatres will be better understood if I show the exact amount of the opposition brought to bear against each other Garrick's Richard was met by that of Ryan; the Lord and Lady Townly of Garrick and Mrs. Woffington, by those of Ryan and Mrs. Horton; the Hamlet and Ophelia of the former two, by those of Ryan (and afterwards of Sheridan) and Mrs. Clive. Garrick and Mrs. Giffard, in "Macbeth," were opposed, first by Quin, then by Sheridan, and Mrs. Pritchard, who played everything, from the Thane's wife to Kitty Pry. Quin's Lear had no weight against the mad old king by

his young rival; and Mrs. Charke's Plume, one of the male characters which Cibber's daughter loved to play, was pale, compared with that of the universal actor.

Meanwhile, Foote commenced his career at the Haymarket, February 6, 1744, as Othello, ("new dressed, after the manner of his country,") to the Iago of Macklin, who had opened that house with a "scratch company," including "pupils"—while he was disengaged at Drury Lane. Foote also played Hamlet, to the Ghost and First Gravedigger of Macklin; and did not find his vocation, in that or in such parts as Lord Foppington.

The literature of the stage did not make progress this season. Cooke's "Love, the Cause," Havard's "Regulus," and the Rev. Mr. Miller's adaptation from Voltaire, "Mahomet," have not survived.

In the season of 1744-5, Quin, to witness his rival's impersonation of Othello to the Iago of Macklin, went to Drury, in company with Bishop Hoadley's son, the doctor. Garrick, on his entrance, looked so ill in Quin's jealous eyes, that the latter compared him to Hogarth's black boy, and said to Hoadley, "Why doesn't he bring in the tea-kettle and lamp?" Great as Quin was in mere declamation, Garrick excelled him in the address to the senate. Victor describes the falling into, and the recovery from, the trance, as "amazingly beautiful;" but he honestly told Garrick that the impersonation was short of perfection. Murphy states that Garrick had the passions at command, and that in the sudden violence of their transitions he was without a rival. The only original character played by Garrick this season was Tancred, in Thomson's "Tancred and Sigismunda," a play too sentimental and stilted, too poor in incident, and too little varied in character, in spite of its occasional richness and sweetness, to interest an audience, in these days. It was otherwise, at the time of its first appearance, when with Garrick, Tancred; and Mrs. Cibber, Sigismunda; the town sighed, wept, and moaned over the love trials of the celebrated pair. Davies describes Garrick and Mrs. Cibber as "formed by nature for the illustration of each other's talents. In their persons," he says, "they were both somewhat below the middle size. He was, though short, well made; she, though in her form not graceful, and scarcely genteel, was, by the elegance of her manners and symmetry of her features rendered very attractive. From similarity of complexion, size, and countenance, they could have been easily supposed brother and sister; but in the powerful expres-

sion of the passions, they approached to a still nearer resemblance. He was master of all the passions, but more particularly happy in the exhibition of parts where anger, resentment, disdain, horror, despair, and madness predominated. In love, grief, and tenderness, she greatly excelled all competitors, and was also unrivalled in the more ardent emotions of jealous love and frantic rage, which she expressed with a degree of sensibility in voice, look, and action, that she never failed to draw tears from the most unfeeling."

A change of proprietorship in the Drury Lane patent afforded Garrick an excuse for repairing to Dublin. When Garrick appeared, on the 9th of December, 1745, as Hamlet, the sensation was extraordinary; but it was increased when Garrick, Barry, and Sheridan acted in the same plays—the "Orphan" and the "Fair Penitent." In the latter play, Barry so distinguished himself in Altamont as to raise that character to a level with those of Lothario and Horatio, played respectively by Garrick and Sheridan. This was the most successful season ever known in Dublin. During its progress Garrick played but one character he had never played before,—Orestes, and that he never repeated in England. His objection to wear the old classical costume was extreme. His sojourn in Dublin was otherwise not void of incident. There was one thin house, and that, by command of a leading lady of fashion, on the night of his playing Falconbridge to Sheridan's King John. The part of Constance belonged to that young beauty, Mrs. Bellamy. Garrick thought her too youthful to enact the mother of Arthur, and he persuaded Sheridan to give the part to Mrs. Furnival. The angry Bellamy flew to lay her wrongs before the Hon. Mrs. Butler, whose word passed for law. Mrs. Butler espoused the suppliant's case, and issused her decree, prohibiting the world over which she ruled from visiting the theatre on the night "King John" was to be played. As she gave excellent dinners and exquisite balls, she was obeyed, and the "quality" left the actors to play to empty boxes. Garrick had recovered from the attendant mortification, when he asked Mrs. Bellamy to play Jane Shore to his Hastings, for his benefit. The lady declined. If she was too young for Constance, she was too young for Jane Shore! Garrick applied to Mrs Butler to use her influence, but it availed nothing. He addressed a high-flown letter to Mrs. Bellamy:—"To my soul's idol, the beautiful Ophelia;" but the epistle fell into wrong hands, and found its way into the papers. Roscius, before leaving

Ireland, paid homage to the Hon. Mrs. Butler, by taking leave of her in a formal visit. With equal formality, as the visitor was about to depart, the lady placed in his hands a small packet. It contained, she said, her own sentiments and convictions, and, in presenting it to Mr. Garrick, all that she requested was, that he would abstain from too curiously inquiring into its contents until he had sailed out of Dublin Bay. The actor had vanity enough to lead him to think, that within the mysterious packet might be enclosed some token of affection. He obeyed the lady's injunctions till the ship, which was conveying him to Holyhead, had passed the Hill of Howth, then, "by your leave, fair seal!" and he arrived at the heart of the mystery. He found a copy of *Wesley's Hymns* and of *Swift's Discourse on the Trinity!*

It remains to be stated that in the last season at Covent Garden, there was one first appearance of note: that of George Anne Bellamy, on the 22nd of November, 1744, as Monimia, in the "Orphan." Quin objected to perform Chamont, to such a child. In the first three acts, her terrors rendered her so incapable, that old Quin's objections seemed justified; but, recovering her power with her courage, the young creature played with such effect, that Quin embraced her after the act-scene dropped, pronounced her "divine," and declared that she was of the "true spirit."

At the Haymarket, Theophilus Cibber revived some of Shakspeare's plays, and produced his daughter Jane, in Juliet, and other parts; but Colley compelled him to withdraw his daughter, and the Lord Chamberlain forced him to close an unlicensed house.

In the season of 1745-6, neither Garrick, nor Quin, nor Mrs. Cibber was engaged at either house. The public was more concerned with the Scottish Rebellion than with the drama. Loyal Lacy, who had succeeded Fleetwood in the patent, applied for leave to raise 200 men in defence of King and Government; and the whole company of Drury Lane players expressed their willingness to engage in it. The actresses applauded the loyal confederacy. The "Nonjuror" was revived, with Luke Sparks as Dr. Wolf, because of its political allusions. Macklin, in six weeks, wrote his "Henry VII., or the Popish Impostor;" and he sent the Pretender, Perkin Warbeck, to execution, without much succouring King George. Ford's ultra-monarchical piece, on the same subject, was revived at Goodman's Fields, and Covent Garden rehearsed another to no effect, as the Rebellion was over before the piece could suppress it!

It may be stated here, that on Saturday, the 28th September, 1745, a new air and song, by Henry Carey, was first brought on the stage. It was already popular off the stage. "On Saturday night last, says the *Daily Advertiser*, "the audience of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, were agreeably surprised by the gentlemen belonging to that house performing the anthem of *God Save our Noble King*. The universal applause it met with, being encored with repeated huzzas, sufficiently denoted in how just abhorrence they hold the arbitrary schemes of our insidious enemies," &c.

When all was jubilee again, and Charles Edward no longer an object of fear, Garrick re-appeared in London. He arrived in town in May, 1746, and closed the season at Covent Garden, by playing six nights at £50 per night. Lacy, meanwhile, had secured Barry, and Garrick generously said of him, that he was the most exquisite lover that had ever been seen on the stage. Barry proved the truth of this criticism, by excelling Garrick in Romeo, in which the latter was so fervent, the former so winning and so seductive.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GARRICK AND QUIN; GARRICK AND BARRY.

This new actor, Spranger Barry, who has come to London, is now in his twenty-seventh year, and has been but two years on the Irish stage. He had followed, with reluctance, the vocation of his father, that of silversmith; but the stage had more attraction for him, and thither he went in pursuit of fame and fortune, nor missed the object he pursued. His success in Ireland was great at a time when there was a body of players there, which for ability has never been surpassed. Spranger was well connected, and it was by the counsel of his kinsman, Sir Edward Barry, that he turned his face towards London, and resolved to try a fall there with David Garrick. His first appearance was at Drury Lane, October 4, 1746 in the character of Othello; Iago, Macklin; Desdemona, Mrs. Ridout. What aspirant entering on a struggle of a similar nature, now, would be gratified with such notice as the press, in the *General Advertiser*, awarded to the new actor, on this occasion?" "Barry performed Othello before a numerous and polite audience, and met *with as great applause as could be expected.* His noble person, his harmonious voice, his transition from love to jealousy, from tenderness to rage, enchanted the audience, and the triumph *was* as great as the player could have hoped for. The fact that for nearly eighty nights, about half of which were given to Othello, Lord Townly, and Macbeth, Barry drew crowded houses, will show that a dangerous rival had sprung up in Garrick's path, at the moment he was contending with Quin, a skilled and older rival at Covent Garden. The last two met together for the first time in the same piece, on the 14th of November, 1746, in the "Fair Penitent;" Horatio, Quin; Lothario, Garrick; Altamont, Ryan; Calista, Mrs. Cibber.

The audience who now first saw them face to face, absolutely

disconcerted them by a hurricane of greeting. When it had passed, every word was breathlessly listened to; every action marked. Some were won by the grand emphasis and the moral dignity of Quin; others by the grace, spirit, and happy wickedness of Garrick. They subsequently played together Falstaff and Hotspur; and Hastings and Glo'ster, in "Jane Shore." Glo'ster was one of Quin's "strut and whisker parts," and Garrick had such advantage over him in Hastings, that "the scale was completely turned in Garrick's favour." Garrick declined to play Jaffier to Quin's Pierre. He wrote a capital farce, "Miss in her Teens," played Fribble in it, and then *created* Ranger, in Dr. Hoadley's "Suspicious Husband," in which Quin declined the part of Mr. Strickland. In Ranger, Garrick surpassed even what old play-goers could recollect of comic excellence, and his "Neck or nothing; up I go!" became a popular saying. The originality of style and expression in this comedy displeased Quin. He contemptuously called the piece a speaking pantomine, and when a name for it was being discussed, suggested scornfully "The Hat and Ladder." Yet, merely as a character piece, but for construction of plot, simplicity and grace of style, and comparative purity of speech and action, the "Suspicious Husband" was the best comedy the eighteenth century had, up to this time, produced. It has a good story clearly and rapidly developed, and the persons of the drama are ladies and gentlemen, and not the dully-vivacious ruffians and the unclean hussies of the Aphra Behn, the Etherege, and Sedley period.

Garrick came off so well in his contest with Quin, that he cheerfully passed over to Drury Lane, to wrestle with Spranger Barry. Drury may be called peculiarly Garrick's, for by purchasing a share in the patent, he commenced that career of management which lasted during his theatrical life, and the brilliancy of which was spoken of in every part of the world where an interest was felt in the intellectual enjoyments of the people. Garrick's company included Barry, Macklin, Delane, Havard, Mills, Yates, Barrington, Sparks, Lowe; and Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs Clive, and other bright, but lesser stars.

In this season (1747-8), the chief attractions were Macklin's Shylock, Barry's Hamlet, Othello, and Pierre; and, in less degree, his Bajazet, Henry V., and Orestes. Garrick drew full houses by Archer and Abel Drugger, Lear and Richard, Sir John Brute and Plume, Hamlet and Macbeth; but the greatest attrac-

tion was when Garrick and Barry played together, as Chamont and Castalio, Hastings and Dumont, Lothario and Horatio, and Jaffier and Pierre. Against such attractions, Covent Garden was more than usually weak. Quin had withdrawn to Bath. Garrick's triumphs soured him. He desired to be asked back, but Rich would not humour him. The one wrote, "I am at Bath; yours, James Quin;" and the other answered, "Stay there, and be d——; yours, John Rich." Drury Lane produced, with characters for Garrick and Barry, Moore's "Foundling," in which Garrick played Young Belmont with great éclat; Barry, Sir Charles Raymond, with dignity and tenderness; and Macklin, a knavish fop, Faddle, with wonderful power. Moore's "Foundling" bears some resemblance to the "Conscious Lovers;" but there is more art in the construction of the plot, and it is purer than that piece which was written to inaugurate an era of purity.

With the season of 1748-9, came increase of opposition between the two houses. At Drury Lane, Garrick and Barry played alternately Hamlet and Macbeth,—the Hamlet of Garrick drawing the greater crowds. In the same pieces, they played,—Barry, *Henry V.*, Garrick, *the Chorus;* Garrick, *Horatio*, Barry, *Lothario;* Garrick, *Othello*, Barry, *Iago;* and *Mahomet*, by Barry, to the *Demetrius* of Garrick, in Johnson's "Irene" Garrick also revived "A New Way to pay Old Debts," in which King, springing from a coffee house, acted Allworth, with great spirit. Garrick failed to perceive the golden opportunity he might have had as Sir Giles; assigned the part to an actor, named Bridges. Garrick's greatest triumph this season was in playing Benedict to the Beatrice of Mrs. Pritchard The town had not had so exquisite a delight for many a day; and Garrick's happiness would have been supreme, but for the fact that Barry and Mrs. Cibber produced as great a sensation, though of another quality, in Romeo and Juliet. This last piece was not repeated, to the annoyance of Barry; and Garrick, at the close of the season, married the pretty Violetta, to the intense disgust of Mrs. Woffington, who now joined Rich.

At the Garden, Quin, having returned, played parts which Garrick would not attempt, and surpassed him in Sir John Brute. While the houses were contending, Foote was filling the little theatre in the Haymarket with an entertainment of his own. Johnson put "Irene," in the hands of Garrick, who produced his friends tragedy, and Johnson was present on the first night, in gala dress. For nine nights, yielding the poet three benefits, Garrick, Barry,

and Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Pritchard,—exerted themselves with indifferent success. There is no local colour in this Turkish piece; the language and sentiment are never oriental in form or spirit. The unities are strictly preserved, but nature is not; and therewith the piece was set aside,—and Johnson never tried the drama again. In this season, too, Aaron Hill brought his efforts to a close, with "Merope." Garrick, *Dorilas;* and Mrs. Pritchard *Merope.*

Covent Garden had its classical tragedy, in Thomson's "Coriolanus," brought forward by Quin, after the author's death. Quin played the hero. This tragedy is worth reading, if it be only to see how very civil and colloquial the hot leader of the Volsci could be made by the Scottish poet in Kew Lane. In Shakspeare's tragedy, we have the annals of a life put into action. In Thomson's, we have a single incident diluted through five acts;—the secession from Rome, and its consequences, forming the staple of a play which ends with a tag of trotting rhymes, as natural, and not half so amusing, as if the grave speaker of them had danced a hornpipe in his *cothurni.*

In 1749-50, Mrs. Cibber, at odds with Garrick, withdrew; and Barry, not allowed to play Romeo, repeated many of his old parts with Garrick, and created Publius to Garrick's Horatius, in Whitehead's "Roman Father." At Covent Garden, Delane exerted his dying efforts fruitlessly against Barry; and Woffington opposed Woodward in Sir Harry Wildair. To Drury, William Shirley brought his "Edward, the Black Prince," in which Edward, for love of Marianne, deserts to the French!

And now we come to the famous "Romeo and Juliet season," that of 1750-51, in which Garrick and Barry were the rival Romeos, Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Cibber the opposing Juliets. Barry, passing to Covent Garden, was enabled to play with Quin, in "Othello," the "Orphan," "Jane Shore," "Henry V.," "Julius Cæsar," "Distressed Mother," Fair Penitent," "Tamerlane," and "King John." In these, Barry's Falconbridge was alone a failure, and Quin held his own so well that his terms for the season were £1000, the largest sum ever yet received by English actor. Garrick, Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Bellamy appeared together in "Zara;" Barry, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Woffington, in the "Conscious Lovers." Mrs. Cibber, as Indiana, made a great point by her delivery of such simple words as these: "Sir, if you will pay the money to a servant, it will do as well!" Barry and Mrs. Woffington in Lord and Lady Townly, and Quin

and Mrs. Woffington in "Macbeth," were among the attractions of Covent Garden, added to which was Rich's Harlequin; but for *that*, Garrick found a rival in Woodward, who played the motley hero with effect. But all these matters were as nothing, compared with the rival Romeos and Juliets. They appeared on the same night, at their respective houses, the 28th of September, 1750. At Covent Garden, the public had *Romeo*, Barry; *Mercutio*, Macklin; *Juliet*, Mrs. Cibber. At Drury, *Romeo*, Garrick; *Mercutio*, Woodward; *Juliet*, Mrs. Bellamy. On the first night, Barry spoke a prologue, in which it was insinuated that the arrogance and selfishness of Garrick had driven him and Mrs. Cibber from Covent Garden. Garrick answered in a lively epilogue, delivered saucily by Mrs. Clive. It was considered a wonderful circumstance that this play ran for *twelve* nights successively; Garrick, indeed, played it thirteen, to show that he was not beaten from the field. At that period the Londoners, who were constant play-goers, demanded a frequent change of performance; and hence, the epigram:—

"'Well, what's to-night, says angry Ned,
As up from bed he rouses;
'Romeo again!' he shakes his head:
'A plague on both your houses!'"

In Barry, Mrs. Cibber had the handsomer, more silver-tongued, and tender lover. She seemed to listen to him in a sort of modest ecstacy; while Mrs. Bellamy, eager love in her eyes, rapture in her heart, and amorous impatience in every expression, was ready to fling herself into *her* Romeo's arms. In Barry, the critics laud his harmony of feature, his melting eyes, and his unequalled plaintiveness of voice. In the garden scenes of the second and fourth acts, and in the first part of the scene in the tomb, were Barry's most effective points. Garrick's great scenes were with the Friar and the Apothecary. Mrs. Bellamy declared that in the scene with the Friar, alone, was Garrick superior to Barry; Macklin swore that Barry excelled his rival, in *every* scene.

The Juliets, too, divided the public judgment. Some were taken by the amorous rapture, the loveliness, and the natural style of Bellamy; others were moved by the grander beauty, the force, and the tragic expression of distress and despair which distinguished Mrs. Cibber. Perhaps, the truest idea of the two Romeos may be gathered from the remark of a lady who was guided by her feelings. "Had I been Juliet," she said, 'to

Garrick's Romeo,—so impassioned was he, I should have expected that he would have *come up* to me in the balcony; but had I been Juliet to Barry's Romeo,—so tender and so seductive was he, I should certainly have *jumped down* to him!" Garrick thought that to play Romeo, it required a grey head on young shoulders,—that is, great judgment as well as feeling. But by giving too much prominence to the grey head, he justified the lady's criticism. Respectively, Barry acted Romeo twenty-three, Garrick, nineteen, times this season,—a season of which there is nothing more to be said, save that Garrick created the part of Gil Blas, in Moore's comedy of that name, and that he produced Mallet's version of "Alfred,"—playing the king.

In 1751-2, Covent Garden relied chiefly on its stock-pieces; and Drury only produced Foote's farce,—"Taste," and "Eugenia," a tragedy, by the Rev. Dr. Francis, the father of Sir Philip, in which there was the coarseness of sentiment, but none of the beauty of language or tenderness of feeling, of Otway.

In this season, Barry acted Romeo twelve, Garrick only six, times; but the latter introduced a new opposition to his rival, in the persons of Mossop and Ross, from Ireland. Mossop first appeared in Richard, with great applause. His Zanga was still more successful. Six times he played Horatio to Garrick's Lothario, and charmed the town frequently by his grand Theseus to Mrs. Pritchard's Phaedra. In Macbeth, Othello, Wolsey, and Orestes, he also displayed great powers. Garrick had his own peculiar triumphs. His Kitely gave new life to Ben Jonson's comedy of character. But this has brought us into a new half-century. Let us look back at the audiences of that which has gone by.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE AUDIENCES OF 1700—1750.

Mr. Isaac Bickerstaffe has laid it down as a rule that, "when we see anything divert an audience, either in tragedy or comedy, that strikes at the duties of civil life, or exposes what the best men in all ages have looked upon as sacred and inviolable, it is the certain sign of a profligate race of men, who are fallen from the virtue of their forefathers, and will be contemptible in the eyes of posterity."

In those legitimate days, the promised presence of royalty, or of a leash of savages, or a quack doctoress, like Mrs. Mapp, the bone-setter, helped to fill the house. Royalty was the most attractive. Shakspeare's "Henry VIII." was frequently played before George I., both at Hampton Court and at Drury Lane. There was a speech in that play which never escaped his notice. It is that addressed by Wolsey to Cromwell, after the King has ordered the Cardinal to write letters of indemnity, into every county, where the payment of certain heavy taxes had been disputed. "A word with you," says the Cardinal :—

> "Let there be letters writ to every shire
> Of the King's grace and pardon.—The grieved commons
> Hardly conceive of me. Let it be noised,
> That through *our* intercession, this revokement
> And pardon comes."

On one occasion when the above lines were spoken, the King said to the Prince of Wales, "You see, George what you have one day to expect." In 1718, his Majesty's servants played seven times before a royal and noble audience, in the great Hall, at Hampton Court. George I. so thoroughly enjoyed all, that Steele told Lord Sunderland he was afraid he should have lost all his actors : for he was not sure the King would not keep them to fill the places at Court, "which he saw them so fit for in the play."

To the performers at Hampton Court their ordinary day's wages was given, with their travelling expenses. The cost of the seven plays amounted to £350; but King George generously threw in a couple of hundred more, as a guerdon to the managers.

Among the unmerited censures which have been flung at Charles II., the least reasonable is, that the grossness of the dramas produced in his days was owing to his bad taste, exhibited in his fondness for French comedy. Had the English poets of that period imitated that comedy, they would not have offended as they did; for, taken altogether, French comedy was remarkable for its freedom from utter coarseness. George II. was more blameworthy than his predecessor Charles, for he encouraged the representation of immoral dramas, and commanded the restoration of scenes which actors deemed too indecent for acting or expression. For didactic plays the monarch had no stomach; but he savoured Ravenscroft's beastly comedies. This perverted taste was strong upon him from the first. When Prince of Wales, he witnessed the acting of "Venice Preserved," and he commanded that the filthy scenes, between Aquilia and Antonio, should be restored! The former part was given to Mrs. Horton, who, though she was something of the quality of the creature she represented, was not only young and beautiful, but was draped in a certain mantle of modesty which heightened the charms of her youth and her beauty; and she must have had a painful task, less than the younger Pinkethman had who played Antonio, in thus gratifying the low predilections of the graceless Prince, who then gave *ton* to audiences.

The position in which monarch and people stood with reference to each other at the theatre, is shown by the fact of George II. having once been received with murmurs of disapprobation, as he entered his box. He was surprised, but on being told that the house was annoyed at having been kept waiting, he took out his watch, looked at it with an air of concern, made an apologetic bow, and was rewarded by a shout of applause which betokened perfect forgiveness.

In the latter part of his life, he took advantage of his position to make loud remarks on the performances at which he was present. Walpole, writing to Mann, says:—"A certain king was last week at the play. The intriguing chambermaid in the farce says to the old gentleman:—'You are villainously old, you are sixty-six, you cannot have the impudence to think of living above two years.' The old gentleman in the stage-box turned about in

a passion, and said, 'This is d——d stuff!' and the royal critic was energetically right." One of the greatest honours ever rendered to a dramatist by royalty, was conferred by Queen Caroline, wife of George II., on Mottley,—a *poet*, by courtesy. For this obscure person, whose benefit night was just announced, the Queen, at a Drawing Room, sold Mottley's tickets, delivering them with her own royal hand to the purchasers, and condescending to receive gold for them in return!

The taste of the University of Oxford was superior to that of the metropolis. However the "more politely written comedies" might be acceptable to a licentious London pit, Oxford asserted the superiority of Shakspeare and Ben Jonson, "for whose masterly scenes," says Cibber, "they seemed to have as implicit a reverence as, formerly, for the ethics of Aristotle." Of modern tragedy they only welcomed "Cato;" and to see this, the playgoers clustered round the doors at noon, and the death of Cato triumphed over the injuries of Cæsar everywhere. On the taste of English audiences generally, Dryden remarks, in his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, that, "as we who are a more sullen people come to be diverted at our plays, so the French, who are of an airy and gay temper, come hither to make themselves more serious. And this I conceive to be why comedies are more pleasing to us and tragedies to them." This appears to me as false as his assertion that rhymed plays were in their nature and fashion peculiarly English! Cibber tells us that critics came to a new play like hounds to a carcase, all in full cry, sometimes for an hour together, before the curtain rose to throw it amongst them. "They seem to me," adds Colley, "like the lion whelps in the Tower, who are so boisterously gamesome at their meals, that they dash down the bowls of milk brought for their own breakfasts." We meet with one instance of forbearance being asked from the critics, on the ground that as a prince of the blood was in the house, he should be allowed to listen to the nonsense undisturbed. The piece was Cibber's pastoral opera, "Love's Riddle." Frederick, Prince of Wales, was present, and at the close of this piece, a lord in waiting was sent behind the scenes to compliment Cibber, and to express the Prince's approval of his conduct. The pit was always the great court of appeal, and on one occasion Cibber showed much courage, good sense, and a due appreciation of his calling as an actor. On an evening when he was announced for one of his best parts, a set of rope-dancers were advertised as about to make their first appearance. Cibber's scorn was roused

by this companionship, and what he did may be best told in his own words. "I was hardy enough," he says, "to *go into the pit*, and acquainted the spectators near me that I hoped they would not think it a mark of my disrespect to them if I declined acting upon any stage that was brought to so low a disgrace as our's was like to be by that day's entertainment." In this he had the support of his fellow-actors, the public approved, and the acrobats were dismissed by the reluctant manager.

Early in the eighteenth century, the fashion of "opera glasses" came in, and went out,—for a time "About five years ago," says the *Tatler*, "I remember it was the fashion to be short-sighted. At a lady's entrance into the play-house, you might see tubes immediately levelled at her from every quarter of the pit and side boxes. However, that mode of infirmity is out." From the Restoration till late in the reign of Queen Anne, the "quality," as Chesterfield would have called them, had been accustomed to arrogate to themselves the privilege of invading the stage itself, while the play was being acted. Through this mob the players had to elbow their way; and where all illusion was destroyed, difficult must have been the task, but marvellous the triumph, of those actors who could make grief appear sincere, and humour seem spontaneous and genuine. This mob was not a civil and attentive crowd, but a collection of impertinent persons, who buzzed and moved about, and changed salutations with the audience, or addressed the players—the chief of whom they must often have supremely exasperated. The "decency of a clear stage" was one of Cibber's great objects; and Queen Anne's decree, issued in January, 1704, prohibited the appearance of *any* of the public on the stage. Persons were also employed to take down profane words uttered by the performers, who were thereupon prosecuted, and, on conviction, fined. The authors who penned the phrases, for omitting which the actor would have been mulcted, were neither molested nor censured. The decree of 1704, for keeping the stage clear, was not universally observed; for, on the opening of the first theatre in Covent Garden, in December, 1732, I find it announced that, on account of the great demand for places, the pit and boxes were laid together at 5*s*., the galleries at 2*s* and 1*s*., and to prevent the stage from being crowded, admission thereto was raised to half a guinea. The fine gentlemen seem to have held that they had a right to go on the stage: for, when "Comus" was produced, in 1738, at Drury Lane, the bills had this notice: N.B.—To prevent any interruption to the music,

dancing, &c., 'tis hoped no gentlemen *will take it ill*, that they cannot be admitted behind the scenes, or in the orchestra." To appear at the theatre in a red coat and a laced hat, indicated a rural beau who was behind his time, and had not yet laid aside a fashion as old as the days of Great Nassau. In the early part of the century, William Shirley affords us a glance inside the house, when speaking of his condemned "Parricide." "That my enemies," says the author, "came resolved to execute before trial, may be gathered from their behaviour ere the play began; for at five o'clock they engaged and overthrew the candles in the music-room, and called a council of war, whether they should attack the harpsichord or not; but to your good fortune," he adds, addressing Rich, "it was carried in the negative. Their expelling ladies from the pit, and sending for wine to drink, were likewise strong indications of their arbitrary and violent dispositions." The ushering of ladies out of the pit was one of the formal indications that serious mischief was a-foot. This was the first ceremony observed at Drury Lane in January, 1740, when the riot took place consequent on the non-appearance of a French dancer, Madame Chateauneuf. When the ladies had been sent home, a noble marquis suggested that it would be proper to set fire to the house! This atrocious proposal was not adopted. The aristocratic rioters contented themselves with destroying the musical instruments, fittings, and costly adornments, sweeping down the panel partitions of the boxes, and finally pulling down the royal arms. The offence, however, was condoned, on the most noble marquis sending £100 to the manager.

In most of these contests it was no unusual thing for one or both parties to hire a body of "bruisers." The side which possessed the greatest number of these Bashi-Bazouks carried the day. When the town took sides, in 1743, in the quarrel between Garrick and Macklin, Dr. Barrowby headed a phalanx of sturdy Macklinites; but Garrick's friends sent against them a band of thirty boxers, who went in, cracked skulls, cleared the pit, and established tranquillity!

Strange things were done in those old days! What should we think now of an author taking a benefit, obtaining at it the presence of the heir to the throne, and delivering an oration on the condition and merits of the royal family, and the state of the nation as regarded foreign and domestic relations? Yet this is what Durfey did, to the delight and edification of his hearers at Drury Lane, in 1715. On other occasions, plays were given

"for the entertainment of the new Toasts and several Ladies of Quality," whereat crowds flocked to behold the nymphs whose names consecrated the flowing bumpers of the beaux, and the married ladies who had enjoyed that honour in their earlier days. At other times, epilogues, laudatory of Eugene and Marlborough, filled the house with friends and foes of those illustrious men, and furnished reasons for very unreasonable conflicts. In 1721, half-a-dozen tipsy beaux, with one among them of the degree of an Earl, who was wont to be tipsy for a week together, raised a riot, to avenge an affront, in the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. His lordship crossed the stage, while Macbeth and his lady were upon it, to speak to a boon companion, who was lolling at the opposite wing. There, too, stood Rich, the manager, who told the peer that, after such indecorum, he should never be admitted behind the scenes again. The Earl administered to Rich a smart slap on the face, which Rich returned. Swords flashed forth in a minute from half-a-dozen scabbards, whose laced and lordly owners solemnly decreed that Rich must die! But Quin, and Ryan, and Walker, rushed to the rescue, with their own weapons in their hands. With aid of some other members of the company, they charged the coxcombs, and drove them headlong out at the stage door, and into the kennel. The beaux, executing a strategic movement, stormed the front of the house, and rushing into the boxes, they cut and thrust right and left, broke the sconces, slashed the hangings, and were proceeding to "fire the house!" when doughty Quin, and a body of constables, flung themselves on the rioters, and carried all they caught before the magistrates. Ultimately, the affair was compromised. To prevent such outrages in future, the King ordered that a guard should attend during the performances at either house. This was the origin of the attendance of soldiers,—a custom which ceased at the patent theatres only a few years since.

The most exacting portion of the audience, however, was to be found in the footmen. From the earliest times, they had been famous for their "roaring." The plan of opening the upper gallery to these fellows, *gratis*, in 1697, was an aggravation rather than a palliative of the evil; but the privilege, although at various times suspended, was not finally abolished till about 1780. The privilege was often abused. Dr. Arne, when a lad, is said to have often got into the "footman's gallery" by aid of a borrowed livery.

One of the most turbulent princes under disappointment at a theatre was the Culloden Duke of Cumberland. When the

"Bottle Conjurer" hoax, contrived, it is said, by the Duke of Montague, duped a Haymarket audience, in 1749, the duke was among the most furious. He stood up in his box, drew his sword, and called in the people to pull down the house. Some one wrested the sword from his hand, and ran away with it. The house was destroyed, as far as the interior fittings were concerned, and this was partly done by a mob which broke in from the outside, when the quieter people had hurried away. An attempt to burn the house, by flinging the candles on the stage, failed; but the fittings were piled up in the street and fired, the curtain surmounting all as a flag.

When Thomson's "Agamemnon" was first played, Pope was present, and he was received, we are told by Johnson, "with a general clap." This shows how familiar London audiences were with their great men, and that the same men must often have exhibited themselves to the same audiences. On the same night, the author of the drama was himself seated, not near Pope, but in the centre of the gallery, surrounded by some friends. There, as soon as Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Furnival entered and spoke, he began to accompany them, by audible declamation, which his friends had difficulty in checking. Johnson, when "Irene" was played, was more dignified and calm. He sat forward in a conspicuous side box, solemnly dressed for the occasion, his wig new curled, a bright scarlet waistcoat, gold laced, purchased for the nonce, and a tranquil, majestic look about him, which the pit frequently contemplated with approval.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EXIT, JAMES QUIN.

The opposition between Garrick and Barry was sustained during the season of 1752-3. The former had a forcible second in Mossop, and attractive ladies to woo in comedy, or slay in tragedy, in Mrs. Bellamy and Mrs. Pritchard. At the Garden, Barry and Mrs. Cibber were in the full bloom of their health and powers. "No two persons were so calculated to assist each other by voice, manner, and real feeling, as they were;" but, as Wilkinson records, "at the close of this season they separated, never to meet again on the same stage." Meanwhile, fashion patronised Garrick and Mrs Pritchard, rather more lavishly than the rival pair. Each had triumphs in new pieces. Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard, in Moore's "Gamester," first played on the 7th February, 1753 (Beverley, Garrick; Mrs. Beverley, Mrs. Pritchard), and Barry and Mrs. Cibber in Jones's "Earl of Essex." Admirable as Garrick was in Beverley, Mrs. Pritchard carried off the chief honours, so natural, so terribly real, and so apparently unconscious of the audience was she in her acting.

Young's tragedy, the "Brothers," written thirty years before, previous to his ordination, and amended by Lady Wortley Montague, succeeded the "Gamesters," in March, 1753. Young surrendered this piece to the players, for the benefit of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. "The Brothers" was acted to thin houses for eight nights, and then shelved. The author realised £400 by it; to which adding £600 more, he gave the £1,000 to the useful Society above named. The play was not original. A great portion is almost literally translated from the French, *Persée et Démétrius*. Many of the speeches are taken piecemeal from Livy. The contest in the third act is splendidly phrased; but the dénoûement is so confused that Young was

obliged to add an epilogue to explain what was supposed to take place at, and after the fall of the curtain!

Barry's Jaffier, played for the first time on the 21st of November, 1752, placed him on an equality with Garrick in that character; but he was not so great in this as in the "Earl of Essex." One sentence in this tragedy, uttered by Barry, seems to have had an almost incredible effect. When the Earl, pointing to the Countess of Rutland, in a swoon, exclaimed, "Oh, look there!" Barry's attitude and pathetic expression of voice were such that "all the critics in the pit burst into tears and then shook the theatre with repeated and unbounded applause." The bricklayer poet, whom Chesterfield brought from Drogheda, only to die, half-starved, in a garret near Covent Garden, attributed the success of the piece to his own powers, whereas it was due to the wonderful acting of Barry and Mrs. Cibber alone.

With this season, James Quin disappeared from the stage. The triumphs of Garrick, followed by those of Barry, drove from the scene the old player who, for nearly forty years, had belonged to the school of Betterton, and of Booth. Quin had something of each, but was distinct from either. His theatrical life embraces the following dates. Quin began his career in Dublin, in 1714, and ended it at Bath, in 1753, (whither he had retired.) Quin was only temporarily jealous even of Roscius. He was a careless dresser of his characters; and he had a sharp sarcasm, but not a lasting ill-feeling, for those who pretended to better taste, and he gave it practical application.

I have already spoken of Quin's early career. After he passed, in 1718, to Lincoln's Inn Fields, Rich designed to bring forward the "Merry Wives of Windsor," but no one seemed daring enough to undertake Falstaff. 'I will venture it,' said Quin, 'if no one else can be found.' 'You!' cried Rich, 'you might as well try Cato after Booth. The character of Falstaff is quite another character from what you think. It is not a little snivelling part that any one can do; and there isn't any man among you that has any idea of the part but myself!' Ultimately, Quin "attempted" the part; his conception of it was admirable, and the house willingly flung itself into a very storm of hilarious jollity. It was Quin's hard fate to kill two actors—Bowen and Williams, who was the Decius to Quin's Cato. Williams, in delivering the line, "Cæsar sends health to Cato," pronounced the last name so like "Keeto," that Quin could not help exclaiming, "Would he had sent a better messenger!" This irritated the

little Welsh actor, the more that he had to repeat the name in nearly every sentence of his scene with Cato, and Quin did not fail to look so hard at him when he pronounced it, that Williams's irritation was at the highest, and in the green-room the irascible Welshman attacked Quin on the ground that he had rendered him ridiculous in the eyes of the audience. Quin treated the affair as a joke, but the Welsh actor would not be soothed. After the play, he lay in wait for the offender in the Piazza, where much malapert blood was often spilt. There Quin could not refuse to defend himself, and after a few passes, Williams lay lifeless on the flag-stones, and Quin was arrested by the watch. Ultimately, he was absolved from blame. At a later period, Quin was well-nigh slaying a more ignoble foe, namely, Theophilus Cibber, whose scoundrelly conduct towards his accomplished wife, Quin had alluded to, under a very forcible epithet applied to her husband. Out of this incident arose a quarrel, and swords were again drawn in the Piazza, where Quin and Cibber slashed each other across the arm and fingers, till they were parted by the bystanders.

Of Quin's rivalry with Garrick, I have already said something. If he was vanquished in that contest, he was not humiliated. His great merit is incontestable. His Cato and Brutus were good; when he was about to act the first part, the bills intimated that Cato would "only be attempted by Mr. Quin;" he was afraid of the reminiscence of Booth; but at the words, "Thanks to the gods, my boy has done his duty!" came the reiterated cry of "Booth outdone!" and the famous soliloquy was enthusiastically *encored!* He was excellent in Henry VIII., Volpone, Glo'ster, Apemantus, Ventidius, the Old Batchelor, and "all the Falstaffs." He was happy only in a few speeches of Pierre. His Plain Dealer is commended, and the soliloquies of Zanga are eulogised. His Macheath and some other operatic parts, he played and sung extremely well. His failures were Macbeth, Othello, Richard, Lear, Chamont, and Young Bevil. Davies says, he often gave true weight and dignity to sentiment by a well-regulated tone of voice, judicious elocution, and easy deportment. The expression of the tender, as well as of the violent, emotions of the heart was beyond his reach. The plain and the familiar rather than the striking and the vigorous became him whose action was either forced or languid, and whose movements were ponderous or sluggish. But his countenance was expressive, his eye vivacious; his voice, clear, full, and melodious; his memory extensive, his pro-

nunciation articulate, and his figure majestic. His great defect lay in his cadenced delivery, and his long and unnecessary pauses. From the retirement of Booth till the coming of Garrick, Quin can scarcely be said to have had a rival, unless it were the clever but lazy Delane.

Quin has left some reputation as a humorist. That he was not well read, even in the literature of that profession, of which he was so distinguished a member, is asserted; but he boasted that he could read men more readily than books, and it is certain that his observation was acute, and the application of what he learned thereby, electrically prompt. If he was inexorable in enforcing the payment of what was due to him, he was also generous with the fortune he amassed. Meanness was not among the faults of Quin. The greatest injury has been done to his memory by the publication of jests, of a reprehensible character, and which were said to be his, merely to quicken their sale. He lived in coarse times, and his jokes may have been, now and then, of a coarse quality; but he also said some of the finest things that ever fell from the lips of an intellectual wit. Of all Quin's jests, there is nothing finer than two which elicited the approval of Walpole. Bishop Warburton, in company at Bath, spoke in support of prerogative. Quin said, "Pray, my Lord, spare me; you are not acquainted with my principles. I am a republican; and, perhaps, I even think that the execution of Charles I. might be justified." "Ay!" said Warburton, "by what law?" Quin replied; "by all the laws he had left them." Walpole saw the sum of the whole controversy couched in those eight monosyllables. The Bishop bade the player remember that all the regicides came to violent ends. "I would not advise your Lordship," said Quin, "to make use of that inference, for, if I am not mistaken, that was the case of the twelve apostles." Warburton and Quin frequently met in the house of Ralph Allen, of Prior Park, Bath. The Bishop treated Quin with an offensively patronising air, and endeavoured to make him feel the distance between them. He once, at Allen's house, admonished the player on his too luxurious way of living, and he requested him, as he could not see him on the stage, to recite some passages from dramatic authors, in presence of a large company assembled in the drawing-room. Quin, after a simulated hesitation consented, and stood up to deliver passages from "Venice Preserved;" but in reciting the lines

> "Honest men
> Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
> Repose and fatten,"

he so pointedly directed his looks, at "honest men" to Allen, and at "knaves" to Warburton, that the company marked the application, and the bishop never asked for a taste of the actor's quality again. When this unpleasant Bishop of Gloucester, published an edition of *Shakspeare*, the actor remarked, "He had better mind his own Bible, and leave ours to us!" This goes far to disprove the story that Quin knew no difference between Shakspeare's "Macbeth," and Davenant's. Quin was open to censure on the score of his epicurism. He so loved John Dory as to declare, that for the enjoyment of it, a man "should have a swallow from here to the antipodes, and palate all the way!" and if, on his servant calling him in the morning, he heard that there was no John Dory in the market, he would turn round, and lazily remark, "then call me again to-morrow."

In his latest days, his powers of retort never failed him. When a fop once condoled with him on growing old, and asked what the actor would give to be as young as *he* was? "I would almost be content to be as foolish!" was Quin's reply. Almost as good was his remark to a dirty fingered clergyman, who boasted of what he got out of his living. "I see you keep the glebe in your own hands, doctor," remarked Quin. Nobody bore with his sharp sayings more cheerfully than Mrs. Woffington. We all know his remark, when Margaret, coming off the stage as Sir Harry Wildair, declared that she believed one half the house thought she was a man. Less known is his comment when on asking her why she had been to Bath? she answered, saucily,—"Oh, for mere wantonness?" and Quin retorted with, "Have you been cured?" It was to a Master of the Mint, who had said, "If 'twere not for your patent you'd be imprisoned!" Quin replied, "Aye, and if 't were not for *your* patent, you'd be hanged," The roughest of Quin's jokes manifested the kindliness of his heart. Here is an obscure actor, Dick Winston, lying,—hungry, weary, and disengaged,—on a truckle bed, in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden. He is in utter despair, as Mr. Quin enters, followed by a man carrying a decent suit of clothes; and the great actor hails him with a "Now, Dick, how is it you are not up and at rehearsal?" Quin had heard of his distress, got him restored to his employment, and took this way of announcing it. Winston dressed himself in a state of bewilderment! "Mr. Quin," said he, hesitatingly, "what shall I do for a little ready money, till Saturday arrives?" "Nay!" replied Quin; "I have done all I can for you; but as for money, Dick, you must put your hand in your own pocket." Quin had put a £10 note there! Again;

when Ryan asked, in an emergency, for a loan, the answer from Quin was, that he had nothing to lend; but he had left Ryan £1000 in his will, and Ryan might have that, if he were inclined to cheat the government of the legacy duty! Frederick, Prince of Wales, was not half such a good patron to Thomson, as James Quin was. When the bard was in distress, Quin gave him a supper at a tavern, for half of which the poet expected he would have to pay; but the player designed otherwise. "Mr. Thomson," said he, "I estimate the pleasure I have had in perusing your works, at £100 at least; and you must allow me to settle that account, by presenting you with the money." In return, the minstrel repaid the good deed with a guerdon of song in the "*Castle of Indolence.*" The dignity of the profession by which he worked such magic was dear to him. "What a pity it is, Mr. Quin," said a peer who enjoyed his wit. "that you are an actor!"—"An *actor?*" exclaimed James, "why, what would you have me be?—a *Lord?*"

Quin's social position, after leaving the stage, was one congenial to a man of his merits, taste and acquirements. At ducal Chatsworth, he and Garrick met. There had not been a cordial intimacy between the two, as actors; but as private gentlemen, they became friends. The two men were left alone, and Quin made the first step toward a reconciliation, by asking a question, the most agreeable he could put,—inquiring after Mrs. Garrick's health.

Quin was Garrick's guest at Hampton, when he was stricken, in 1765, with the illness which ultimately proved fatal. He died, however, in his own house in Bath. "I could wish," he said, the day before, "that the last tragic scene were over; and I hope I may be enabled to meet and pass through it with dignity." He passed through it becomingly, on the 21st of January, 1766; and Garrick placed becoming lines on the old actor's tomb, in the Abbey.

Garrick struggled with Quin for mastery, vanquished him, became his friend, and hung up over his grave a glowing testimony to his talent and his virtues. Foote's portrait of Quin is so well drawn as to merit an extract:—"Mr. Quin's deportment through the whole cast of his characters is natural and unaffected, his countenance expressive without the assistance of grimace, and he is, indeed, in every circumstance, so much the person he represents, that it is scarcely possible for any attentive spectator to believe that the hypocritical, intriguing Maskwell, the suspicious superannuated rake, the snarling old bachelor, and the jolly, jocose

Jack Falstaff are imitated, but real persons. . . I can only recommend the man who wants to see a character perfectly played, to see Mr. Quin in the part of Falstaff; and if he does not express a desire of spending an evening with that merry mortal, why, I would not spend one with *him*, if he would pay my reckoning." With a bottle of claret and a full house, all concurrent testimony shows that Quin, in this part, was unapproachable.

Finally, Quin's will is not uninstructive as an illustration of the actor's character. There is, perhaps, not a friend he had possessed, or servant who had been faithful to him, who is forgotten in it. Various are the bequests, from £50 "to Mr. Thomas Gainsborough, limner," or to a cousin practising medicine in Dublin, to £500 and a share of the residue to a kind-hearted oilman in the Strand. To one individual he bequeaths his watch, in accordance with an "imprudent promise" to that effect! James Quin did not like the man, but he would not break his word! *Requiescat in pace!* His death gave satisfaction to none but the John Dorys; and Walpole wrote no bad epitaph on him, when he said: "Pray, who is to give an idea of Falstaff, now Quin is dead?"

CHAPTER XXVII.

ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND.

In 1753-4, Mrs. Cibber, at Drury, played with Garrick against Barry and Miss Nossiter, who increased Barry's ardour in Romeo, his tenderness in Jaffier, and his playfulness as Florizel, inasmuch as that he and the lady were mutually in love, and all the house was in the secret. Miss Nossiter, however, did not realise her early promise. Contemporary critics speak of the novice as being of a delicate figure, graceful in the expression of distress, but requiring carefulness in the management of her voice, and a more simple elocution. One of her judges curiously remarks:—"She frequently alarmed the audience with the most striking attitudes." At the end of a brief career, she died, after bequeathing to Barry, the Romeo, for whom more than Miss Nossiter professed to be dying,—£3,000.

Mossop now succeeded Quin, at Drury Lane. Foote played the Cibber parts in comedy, and, in a revival of "King John," Garrick made an unlikely Falconbridge, and Mossop a superb tyrant. Drury played Glover's "Boadicea," which Walpole ridiculed, and Archbishop Herring thought admirable. Crisp's "Virginia" flourished through Garrick's acting. It was, however, a poor play, even for a custom-house officer. The third classical tragedy was Whitehead's "Creusa," founded on the *Ion* of Euripides. Walpole praises the interest, complexity, yet clearness and natural feeling of the plot. On the other hand, M'Namara Morgan's romantic tragedy, "Philoclea" owed its ephemeral success to the fire, grace, beauty, and expression of Barry and Miss Nossiter (Pyrocles and Philoclea), the two lovers. The house literally "sighed like furnace" for very sympathy. Dr. Francis's "Constantine," in which Barry and Mrs. Bellamy played Constantine and Fulvia, was a failure; but, *therefore*, Mrs. Bellamy

recommended the author to the patronage of Fox; and the father of Sir Philip Francis owed his promotion to the Suffolk rectory of Barrow, to Lord Holland.

In the season of 1754-5, Garrick was supreme. Barry left Rich for Dublin, and Sheridan played in all his best parts against Garrick and Mossop. Rich brought out "Appius," the ill success of which was reasonably attributed by the author, Moncrieff, to the fact that Sheridan had *lopped off the fifth act!* Garrick created Achmet in "Barbarossa;" Mossop playing the tyrant, and Mrs. Cibber Zaphira. "There is not one new thought in it," wrote Walpole; "and, which is the next material want, but one line of perfect nonsense. 'And rain down transports in the shape of sorrow!'" Yet it had a run; but love of novelty, grand scenery and costume, good acting and wise management, could, so says the *Monthly Review*, make any nonsense run for nine or ten nights.

After Miss Barton, the Mrs. Abington of later times, had flashed her bright promise at the Haymarket, Garrick rendered the season of 1755-6 remarkable by three absurd assaults on Shakspeare, in *emendations* of the "Winter's Tale," "Taming of the Shrew," and the "Tempest," cutting, clipping, adding, taking away, and saying the while, that he wished:—"To lose no drop of that immortal man!" This season was also remarkable for the riot consequent on his producing the "Chinese Festival," when the public, hating the French, with whom we were at war, insisted on his asking pardon for the introduction of Swiss, Germans, and Italians! Garrick proudly answered, that if they would not allow him to go on with his part (Archer), he would never, *never*, again set foot on the stage! Still more famous was this season, for the fray between the Rival Queens, Woffington—Roxana, and Bellamy—Statira. The superb dresses of the latter drove poor Peg into such fury, that she nearly stabbed her rival in downright earnest. Failing in her attempt, she stabbed her with words, and taunted Bellamy with having a minister (Henry Fox) who indulged her in such extravagances. "And you," retorted the other gentle creature, "have half the town who do not!" But not for these things, nor for Foote's satirical farces against Murphy, nor for Murphy's against Foote, was the season so famous, as it was for being that in which Barry returned to Covent Garden, and entered the lists once more against Garrick, by acting King Lear, with Miss Nossiter as Cordelia, which part Mrs. Cibber played to Garrick's King. In this contest, Garrick

carried away the palm. Barry was dignified, impressive, pathetic, but unequal, failing principally in the mad scenes, which appear to have been over-acted. It was there where Garrick was most sublime, natural, and affecting. There was no rant, no violence, no grimacing. The feeble, miserable, but still royal old man was there; slow of emotion, vague of look, uncertain, forgetful of all things save of the cruelty of his daughters. It was said for Barry that he was "every inch a king;" for Garrick, that he was "every inch King Lear." The wits who admired the latter, repeated the epigram:—

> "The town has found out diff'rent ways,
> To praise the diff'rent Lears!
> To Barry they give loud huzzas!
> To Garrick—only tears."

others lauded Barry in the lines which said:—

> "Critics attend! and judge the rival Lears;
> While each commands applause, and each your tears.
> Then own this truth—well he performs his part
> Who touches—ev n Garrick to the heart."

In 1756-7, Garrick ventured King Lear, with less of Tate, and more of Shakspeare; he was as resolute, however, against introducing the Fool, as he was with respect to the Gravediggers, in Hamlet. On the other hand, he acted Don Felix.

At the other house, Barry failed in Richard III.; but the treasury recovered itself by the production, in March, of "Douglas," in which Barry, six feet high, and in a suit of white puckered satin, played Norval to the Lady Randolph of Mrs. Woffington. The originals of those parts, when the piece was first played in Edinburgh, in the previous December, were Digges and Mrs. Ward. This piece was the glory of the Scottish stage, and a scandal to great part of the community. From the age of Mary Stuart, the church and the stage had been at odds; in Scotland, players came and went under alternate patronage and persecution. Actors found protection by being enrolled in noblemen's families as servants; and they were not tolerated by law when they opened the theatre in the Canongate, in 1746. Thither, ten years later, the Rev. John Home, then thirty-two years of age, brought his tragedy of "Douglas." He had been the successor of Blair (of the *Grave*), in the living of Athelstanford; and had left it, to fight against the Pretender, at Falkirk, where

he was captured. The reverend warrior escaped to England. Collins dedicated to him his *Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands*. Home returned northward, full of the love of poetry, and powerful in the expression of it. His great dramatic essay was a grievous offence against the laws of his church, to the practical duties of which he had again surrendered himself. Had it not been that Sarah Ward, the actress, was willing to help author and friends, even the reading of "Douglas" would never have come off. Sarah lent her sitting room in the Canongate, to Home; and Digges was present and silent, for once, with Mrs. Ward, Lords Elibank and Milton, and Monboddo and Kames, the last two not yet law lords, and the Rev. J. Steele and W. Home, to enact audience. The characters were thus cast; and a finer group of intellectual persons, sitting as they could best catch the light, in an obscure room of the Canongate, cannot well be imagined. Lord Randolph (or Barnard, according to the original cast) was read by Robertson; Glenalvon, by the greater historian, David Hume; Old Norval, by the famous Dr. Carlyle, the minister of Musselburgh; and Douglas, by Home, in right of authorship. Lady Randolph was allotted to Professor Fergusson; and the part of Anna was read by Dr. Blair, the minister of the High Church, and author of the once popular sermons! When the reading had concluded, the whole party, except Mrs. Ward, went and dined at the Griskin Club, in the Abbey.

But the Presbyterys of Edinburgh and Glasgow, speedily denounced author, play, dramatists, and dramas generally, as instruments and children of Satan; and excommunicated, not only Home, but actors and audiences, and all abettors and approvers! The play was said to be an encouragement to suicide. Ministers who had been present were prosecuted. They who had come from a distance, pleaded that they could not have been known; they who were not strangers avoided scandal, they said, by hiding their faces, to prevent recognition; while a bold minority justified their presence, for which, however, they were obliged to ask pardon. The triumph of the play compensated for everything. The nation confirmed the sentiment of the critic in the pit, whose voice was heard in the ovation of the first night, exultantly exclaiming, "Weel, lads, what do ye think o' Wully Shakspeare, noo?" The tragedy was offered to Garrick, who refused it. Mrs. Cibber, in Lady Randolph, would extinguish Norval! Rich accepted it, as readily as Garrick had declined it; and in March, 1757, London confirmed the judgment of the city in the north.

Gray declared that Home had retrieved the true language of the stage, which had been lost for a century. The Prince of Wales conferred a pension on the expelled minister, and Sheridan sent to Home a gold medal, worth ten guineas.

Margaret Woffington was the original Lady Randolph in England, and as she now retires from the scene, we address ourselves to the telling of her story.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MARGARET WOFFINGTON.

That good-tempered woman, who is looking at the pretty child drawing water from the Liffey, is Madame Violante. She is mistress of a booth, for rope-dancing, in Dame Street. As the young girl turns homeward, with the bowl of water on her head, the lady follows, admiring. The object of her admiration is as bright as a sunbeam. If she be ill-clad, she is exquisitely shaped, and she will live to lend her dresses to the two Miss Gunnings, to enable them to attend a drawing-room at the Castle: their first steps towards reaching the coronets of countess and duchess that were in store for them.*

This child, meanwhile, enters a huckster's shop, kept by her widowed mother, on Ormond Quay. The father was a bricklayer, and married the mother when she was a laundress. There is another child in this poor household, a sister of the water-bearer, fair, but less fair than she. When Madame Violante first saw Mary and Margaret Woffington, she little dreamed that the latter would be the darling of London society, and the former the bride of a son of one of the proudest of English earls.

Madame Violante induced Margaret's mother to let her have the pretty child as a pupil. Margaret was apt, and performed little tricks while her mistress was on the rope, learned French thoroughly, and acquired graces of person, style, and carriage, by which she gained fortune, and reaped ruin. As a child, she

* The dresses were of Lady Macbeth and Juliet. Miss Wynne (Diary of a Lady of Quality) says that Sheridan, the manager, lent the dresses, that the mother might present her penniless girls; and that he claimed a kiss from each as a reward. He subsequently saved them from a plot for their abduction, and lived to be refused admission to the parties of the Countess of Coventry and Duchess of Argyle.

played Macheath, in Madame's booth, when the "Beggars' Opera" was acted by children. From the age of seventeen to twenty, she was on the regular Dublin stage, charming all eyes and hearts by her beauty, grace, and ability in a range of characters from Ophelia to Sir Harry Wildair. Rich engaged her, at a moderate salary, and, in 1740, brought her out, at Covent Garden, as Sylvia to Ryan's Plume and the younger Cibber's Brazen. A successful *coup d'éssai* emboldened her to try Sir Harry. She played it night after night, for weeks, and Wilks was forgotten. It is said she so enraptured one susceptible damsel, that the young lady, believing Sir Harry to be a man, made him an offer of marriage! Walpole was among the last to be pleased. "There is much in vogue, a Mrs. Woffington," he writes, in 1741; "a bad actress, but she has life." Walpole's friend, Conway, confesses that "all the town was in love with her;" but in Conway's eyes, she was only "an impudent Irish faced girl." Even these fastidious gentlemen became converted, and, at a later period, Walpole records her excellent acting in Moore's "Foundling," with Garrick, Barry, and Mrs. Cibber. Her Lothario was not so successful as her Sir Harry; but her high-born ladies, her women of dash, spirit, and elegance, her homely, humorous females, in all these she triumphed, in spite of a voice that was almost unmanageable for its harshness.

Margaret and Garrick were soon on intimate terms. In 1742, they were together in Dublin, and on their return, Garrick and Mrs Woffington, living together, alternately supplied the expenses of the household, each being at the head of the latter during a month. In Garrick's term, the table is said to have been but moderately furnished; whereas during the beautiful Margaret's month, there was a banquet and brilliant company daily; all the fashionable men about town being delighted at an invitation from the Irish actress. Johnson used to be among those visitors, and he noticed the difference in the quality of the housekeeping, after his usual fashion. "Is not this tea stronger than usual, madam? It's as red as blood?" It was Margaret's month, and the liberal lady smiled. That Garrick ever entertained thoughts of marrying Margaret, I doubt, despite the story told by the lady to Murphy, that he had gone so far as to buy the wedding-ring, and try it on her finger. In the early part of the few years which elapsed between Garrick's debût in London and his marriage with Eva Maria Violetta, he lived in such affectionate intimacy with the

charming Irish actress, as to address to her the song beginning with

> "Once more I'll tune the vocal shell
> To hills and dales my passion tell,
> A flame which time can never quell,
> Which burns for you, my Peggy!"

Notwithstanding this homage, the lady's infidelities were so numerous, that she had no right to expect that, of so inconstant a mistress of *one* home, Garrick was likely to make the wife of another. Garrick preserved, to his last days, a pair of silver buckles which once belonged to that Peggy, who, from first to last, enthralled more hearts than any actress since the days of Elizabeth Barry; from those of young fellows with the down just budding on their lips, to what was left of those of old Owen Mac Swiney and older Colley Cibber, between which two ancient danglers, people compared Margaret to Susanna between the two Elders. In good truth, her company was sought after by men of the first rank and distinction; and persons of the gravest character, and most eminent for learning, felt honoured by her acquaintance, and were charmed with her conversation. She founded her preference of the company of men to that of women, on the fact that the latter never talked but of satins and silks. She herself was endowed with understanding, which was improved by contact with intellectual society, and by much reading. In short, it seems to have been impossible to resist this clever, vivacious, affable, and good-natured creature; one who laughed unaffectedly at the joke which touched her own character nearest; whose errors are forgotten in her much-abounding charity, and who not only faithfully kept that part of the decalogue which says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's *wife*," but provided a home for her neighbours' wives, through many generations, by building the asylum for them, which still exists at Teddington.

Margaret Woffington was the most beautiful and the least vain of the women of her day. There is a portrait of her at Knowle; and Faber's print, from Eckard's picture, represents a handsome and graceful woman, with a face full of refined character. Whatever part she had to play, she identified herself therewith; and did it happen to be that of an old or ordinary woman, she descended to the level of circumstances, and hid every natural beauty beneath wrinkles and stolidity, according to the exigencies of the part. Her sister, Mary Woffington, failed comparatively as an actress; but she achieved better fortune as a woman than her

more able and attractive sister. By marriage she connected herself with Walpole's family, and Walpole, whose mother was the daughter of a timber dealer, was disgusted! "I have been unfortunate in my own family," says Walpole to Mann in 1746: "my nephew, Captain Cholmondeley, has married a player's sister." Captain, subsequently the *Reverend* Robert Cholmondeley, was the second son of Earl Cholmondeley. The earl was greatly incensed, and he went to Mrs. Woffington to tell her as much. But Margaret so softened him by her winning ways, and won him by her good sense, and subdued him to her will, that he, at last, called her his "dear Mrs. Woffington," and declared that he was happy at his son's choice, in spite of his having been "so very much offended previously." This aroused Margaret's spirit a little. "Offended previously!" she exclaimed; "I have most cause to be offended now." "Why, dear lady?" asked the earl. "Because," replied the actress, "I had one beggar to support, and now I shall have two!"

To see Margaret Woffington and Smith in Sylvia and Plume, was an ecstasy; *he* being so graceful and vivacious, while *she* charmed her audiences in both the dresses worn by Sylvia, rendering, says the *Dramatic Censor*, "even absurdities pleasing by the elegance of her appearance and the vivacity of her expression." Mrs. Bellamy was so overcome by her acting Jocasta in "Œdipus," that she fainted on the stage, when playing Eurydice to her. Some persons set this down to affectation; but George Anne was not a lady likely to affect a swoon for the sake of complimenting a rival actress. Mrs. Woffington was the only player who acted Sir Harry Wildair with the spirit and elegance of the original, Wilks,—to whom Garrick and Woodward were, in this part, inferior. She was excellent in Lady Plyant, and in females of high and of dignified elegance. Millamant, Lady Townly, Lady Betty Modish, and Maria, in the "Nonjuror," were exhibited by her with such happy ease and gaiety, that the excesses of these characters appeared not only pardonable, but agreeable. With "grave discourse and wrinkled face," she would play the mother of Coriolanus, and then, "in my own shape again," bound on in the epilogue, and display the natural charms to which she made allusion, in the words:

> "And if I have a certain magic spell,
> Or in my tongue, or wit, or shape, or eyes,
> Which can subdue the strong, or fool the wise,
> Be not alarmed!"

Her Jane Shore and Hermione were full of merit. In male attire, the elegance of her figure was most striking; but I cannot suppose that her Lady Randolph, of which she was the original representative in London, in any one point approached that of Mrs. Crawford (Barry), or of Mrs. Siddons. Indeed, her voice unfitted her for tragic parts. She called it her "bad voice!"

Margaret Woffington's independence was one of the great traits in her character. Mrs. Cibber, about six years before she left the stage, was often too indisposed to act; at short notice, Mrs. Woffington was once advertised to play some favourite part of her own, instead. She pleaded illness, and would not go to the theatre. The next night, in Lady Jane Grey, she was greeted with a hurricane of hisses, for having failed to appear the evening before. They even called upon her to "beg pardon!" *then*, her complexion glowed with angry beauty, her eyes flashed lightning, and she walked off the stage, magnificently scornful. It was with difficulty she was induced to return, and when she *did*, the imperious fair one calmly faced her excited audience with a "*now then!*" sort of look. She expressed her willingness to perform her duty, but it was for them to decide: "On or off; it must be as you please; to me, it is a matter of perfect indifference;" The audience petted this wayward creature, and the contending parties were friends for ever after.

Margaret and Kitty Clive got on as ill together as the former and Mrs. Cibber. The green-room was kept alive by their retorts, joyous by their repartees, or uncomfortable by their dissensions. But there were no two dramatic queens who hated each other so cordially as Margaret and George Anne Bellamy. In rivalry on the stage, they entered into the full spirit of their parts, felt all or more than they said, and not only handled their daggers menacingly, but losing control of temper sometimes, used them more vigorously than law or good manners would allow.

After a career in London of undiminished popularity, she passed over to Dublin for three seasons, 1751-54, where she drew thousands of pounds, had a salary, first of £400, then of £800 for the season, was enthroned at the Beef Steak Club by Sheridan, addressed verses, free enough to be what they were not—her own,—to the Lord Lieutenant, and altogether ruled the court, the camp, and the grove. Victor extols all her tragic parts, save Jane Shore; and Mrs. Delaney confirms his account of her Lady Townly, as being better than any the town had seen since Mrs. Oldfield's time; adding, that she pronounced well,

and spoke sensibly; but that her voice was not agreeable, and that her arms were ungainly. Of her Maria, Mrs. Delaney says that the effect in Dublin was marred by the immoderate size of Mrs. Woffington's hoops!

It was at this time she took a step which was sharply canvassed, that of forsaking the church in which she was born, and putting her arm under that of Protestantism. Murphy fancies that as Roman Catholics could not then legally wear a sword, she renounced her old faith that she might carry one, in male characters, without offending the law! This is nonsense. Sheridan and Margaret went to Cavan; and there the lady enrolled herself as a member of the church by law established. The influences which moved her to this were, simply that *she* would not lose her chance of an estate for the sake of the old religion in which she had been baptized. Her ex-admirer, Mac Swiney, had left her heiress to his estate of £200 a year; and that the bequest might be legal, and the succession uncontested, Margaret qualified for prospective fortune by declaring herself a Protestant, in the presence of competent witnesses!

She returned to the "Garden" in the season 1754-5, going through all her best characters in that, and the two succeeding, and her final seasons. The last male part she acted was Lothario; the last original part she created was Lady Randolph. Her Lothario had not been highly esteemed; and Barry, in the memorable suit of white-puckered satin, had produced all the effect in "Douglas." This affected her spirits. Then she was annoyed at young Tate Wilkinson, who had audaciously imitated the worst parts of Margaret's voice. Almost the only unkind act that can be laid to Mrs Woffington's charge, was her consequent attempt to induce Rich not to enter into an engagement with Wilkinson. Her scorn drove the unfortunate young gentleman from the green-room, despite the interference of Shuter. One night, as she was playing Clarissa in the "Confederacy," she saw Wilkinson in a stage box with Captain Forbes, and unable to control her rage, she came close to the box, and absolutely made him shrink back by the sneering sarcasm with which she flung at him one of her speeches. A rude woman in the box above mimicked her peculiar voice so well, as Clarissa turned away, that Mrs. Woffington thought it came from Wilkinson. That night she swept through the green-room, a beautiful fury, and the next day, at Rich's levee, she assailed Tate with terrible eloquence, prophesied evil to him, wished the evil she prophe-

sied, and altogether manifested little of the kindly nature which was, in truth, her own. Soon followed thereon the fatal 3rd of May, 1757. The play was "As You Like It," in which she acted Rosalind. Tate Wilkinson was standing at the wing as she passed on to the stage, and on her way she complimented him, ironically, on his recent success as a debutant. Wilkinson watched and studied her throughout the piece, till she came off early in the fifth act, and suddenly complained of being ill. Wilkinson offered his arm, leaning on which she retired to the green-room, rallied, went on, changed her dress, again trod the stage, defiantly of fate, and again yielded to the coming blow; but only for a moment. Once more she recovered, her self-will being so great, and she began the lines of the epilogue. She had just uttered, with fearful gaiety, the words—"If I were among you, I'd kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me——," when that once saucy tongue became paralysed. A last flash of courage impelled her to an attempt to proceed; but it was vain, and at the sense that she was stricken, she flung up her hands, uttered a wild shriek in abject terror, and staggering towards the stage door, fell into the arms stretched to receive her; and, amidst indescribable confusion of cheering and commiserating cries, Margaret Woffington disappeared from the stage, for ever.

In November of that year, a fine gentleman asked, "What has become of Mrs. Woffington?" "She has been taken off by Colonel Cæsar," answered another fine gentleman. "Reduced to *aut Cæsar aut nullus*," said the smart Lord Tyrawley. "She is gone to be married," said Kitty Clive; "Colonel Cæsar bought the license at the same time Colonel Mostyn bought his." At this time, poor Margaret, in the meridian of her beauty, somewhat weary of her calling, ashamed, it is said, of her life, was slowly dying at Teddington. So slowly, that the end did not come till 1760. In the interval, Margaret Woffington lived to good purpose. Unreasonably exalted as her character has been, it is impossible to contemplate it at its close, without respect. Charity, good works, sorrow for the past, hope, all the Magdalen was there in that beautiful wreck. In a playful time she and Colonel Cæsar had agreed that the survivor of the two should be the heir of the other; but Margaret would not let a jest do injury to her family and to the poor. Of her few thousands, she left the greater part to her sister; her mother she had pensioned and protected; to the poor of Teddington, among whom she re-

poses, she left well-endowed alms houses. Those alms houses form a better relic of Margaret Woffington than the stage jewels which her dresser, Mrs, Barrington, a respectable actress, hoped to inherit. These were claimed by, and surrendered to, the Hon. Mrs. Cholmondeley, and were carried to Ireland by that lady's daughter, on her marriage with Sir William Bellingham.

Such is the story of one, of whom an anonymous contemporary has written,—"Mrs. Woffington is a downright cheat, a triumphant plagiary. She first steals your heart, and then laughs at you, secure of your applause. There is such a prepossession arises from her form; such a witchcraft in her beauty, and to those who are personally acquainted with her, such an absolute command, from the sweetness of her disposition, that it is almost impossible to criticise upon her." While Margaret Woffington was dying, there was a funeral passing through Berkeley Square, "Mr. Colley Cibber!" was the name often pronounced in the crowd, and something remains to be said of him who bore it.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COLLEY CIBBER.

In the year 1671, artists were canvassing the merits of a monument which was that year beginning to rear its head on Fish Street Hill. A foreign sculptor from Holstein was, at that moment, preparing designs for the *basso relievo* now on the pedestal. This sculptor lived in Southampton Street, Bloomsbury, where on the 6th of September, 1671, while arranging the completion of his figures, his lady upstairs,—she was of a cavalier family, and had the blood of William of Wyckham in her veins,—presented him with the counterfeit presentment of its father. The child thus born, as it were, with the London Monument, was named Colley Cibber.

How Colley fared at school, stood his own ground, and was envied by the dunces he beat; how he was determined to succeed in life, and *did* succeed, and was therefore denounced, as an ass or a knave, by those who failed, or who hated him for his success, or who feared the sarcasms which he himself delivered, without fear,—is known to us all. The success of Colley Cibber, throughout life, may be ascribed to three circumstances; the acuteness with which he detected opportunity, the electric rapidity with which he seized it, and the marvellous unerring tact by which he turned it to profit. By this he was distinguished, despite some easy negligence and luxurious idleness, from his earliest days; and from his first to his last consequent triumph, he paid for each in the malevolence of those who envied him his victories and denied his merit. When a lad at Grantham Free School, he alone accepted the magisterial proposal to compose a funeral oration, in honour of the dead King, Charles II. He gained such glory by his achievement that his fellows sent him to Coventry. The ode, he modestly describes as being as execrable as anything

he composed half a century later, when poet-laureate! Colley was satisfied with his glory, and treated his young adversaries with all the good-nature and audacity with which he subsequently treated his better armed enemy, Mr. Pope. When he "met the Revolution," in 1688, at Nottingham, failing to obtain military employment, he gladly availed himself of an opportunity to wait behind Lady Churchill's chair, as she sat at table with the Princess Anne. Half a hundred years later, he refers to the friend he acquired by thus performing lacquey to her; and he happily caps a climax of glorious compliment to the then Duchess of Marlborough, by flatteringly alluding to a distinction which she received not from earthly sovereigns, but "from the Author of Nature;" that of being "*a great grandmother without grey hairs.*"

He failed, indeed, in obtaining a commission, as he did in an attempt to enter the church; but for those failures Cibber was, in no wise, responsible. Had he grasped a pair of colours we should have heard of him, honourably, in Flanders. Had he received ordination, he would have known how to push his way to a bishopric. Colley being alike debarred from ascending the pulpit, or leading to the imminently deadly breach, turned to the sock and buskin, alternately donning the one or the other, for nothing; but watching his opportunity, and never failing to take advantage of it. He gladly, after a term of hungry probation, accepted the little part of the Chaplain, in the "Orphan;" and when the old comedian Goodman swore there was the stuff for the making of a good actor in the young fellow, the tears came into Cibber's eyes. He recognised that his good time had commenced, and he watched opportunity more indefatigably than ever.

Meanwhile, he was happy on ten, and fifteen shillings a week, with food, and raiment, and lodging, under his father's roof, and an ardent desire that he might one day play lover to Mrs. Bracegirdle. When the ambitious young fellow had induced his sire to allow him £20 a year, in addition to the £1 a week which he then gained on the stage, Colley made love to a young lady off the stage, and married at the age of twenty-two. He and his wife were as happy as any young couple that ever took a leap in the dark; but beyond that darkness he looked eagerly, watching still for opportunity. It came, when Congreve's "Double Dealer" was to be played before Queen Mary Kynaston had fallen ill, and who could learn and play the part of Lord Touchwood in a few hours? Congreve looks at Cibber, and the young actor looks confidently at Congreve. He undertakes the task,

fired by the thought of promotion, and of performing before a crowned head. His success was perfect. Congreve was delighted, and the salary of the ecstatic comedian was raised some few shillings a week. His young wife danced round him for joy, at this glimpse of Golconda. The company of actors began to dislike him, after the fashion of his Grantham school-fellows.

Little recked Colley Cibber what men thought of him, provided only the thought helped him towards fortune. At a pinch, he supplied a new prologue, for the opening of a season at Drury Lane, the prosperity of which was menaced by an opposition from the new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The poet begged hard that he might have the speaking of his own verses, but he was not accounted actor good enough for that, and thus he lost, not by error of his own, a particular opportunity. But the Master slipped a couple of guineas into his hand, and declared that he, Colley, "was a very ingenious young man." Cibber was consoled; he had, at all events, profited by the opportunity, of making way with his "Master." To be sure, said Colley, "he knows no difference between Dryden and Durfey;" but that also made no difference to Colley. Some weeks subsequently the "Old Batchelor" was suddenly substituted for "Hamlet." When all the parts had been distributed to the principal actors, Cibber, ever vigilant, and ever ready, quietly remarked that they had forgotten one of the most telling parts in the whole play, Fondlewife. It was Doggett's great part. Who would dare to face a public whose sides were still shaking with laughter at Doggett's irresistible performance of this character? No one knew the part; mid-day was at hand; the curtain must go up by four; the play could *not* be changed. What *was* to be done? Colley, of course, offered himself to do it, and his offer was treated with contempt; but the managers were compelled to accept it. Here was a golden chance which had golden results for Cibber. He played the part, at night, in dress, feature, voice, and action, so like to the incomparable Doggett himself, that the house was in an uproar of delight and perplexity,—delight at beholding their favourite, and perplexity as to how it could possibly be he. For there sat Doggett himself, in the very centre of a forward row in the pit; a stimulant rather than a stumbling-block to Cibber; and the astonished witness of the newly-acquired glory of this young actor, who always seemed ready to undertake anything, and who was always sure of accomplishing whatever he undertook. "It would be too rank an affectation," he writes, "if I

should not confess that to see him there, a witness of my reception, was to me as consummate a triumph as the heart of vanity could be indulged with." Surely, this persevering fellow merited success; but still were his playfellows like his schoolfellows. They envied and decried him. If he solicited a part, he was put by, with the remark, that *it was not in his way*. He wisely replied, that any part, naturally written, should be in the way of every man who pretended to be an actor. The managers thought otherwise, and left Colley—but not to despair. He had just discerned another opportunity, and, *more suo*, he clutched it, worked it to a noble end, and with it achieved a double and a permanent triumph—triumph of author and of actor.

For many years there had not been a comedy written but at the expense of husbands. They were the dupes and dolts of the piece; were betrayed and dishonoured; cudgelled, and contented in their abject debasement. Audiences had had something too much of this, and Cibber was the first to perceive it. He himself was not yet sufficiently enlightened to discover that the majority in all theatrical audiences were gasping for a general purer air of refinement, and were growing disgusted with the mire in which such writers as Ravenscroft, and others with more wit than he, plunged and dragged them. Cibber, at all events, made the first step out of this slough, by producing his "Love's Last Shift." It was not readily accepted, but it forced its way to that consummation, by the testimony borne to its merits by competent judges. It was played in January, 1696. Its grossness is scarcely inferior to that of comedies most offending in this way, and which were produced both earlier and later. Nevertheless, it marks an epoch. There was no comically-outraged husband in it. The style is still that of the old, free, coarse-comedy, in all the other persons of the drama. The women lack heart and natural affection; the men are unrefined and uncivil, and both converse too much after the intolerable mode which was not yet to be driven from the sadly-abused stage. Sentiment there is, indeed, after a sort; but when it is not smart and epigrammatic, it is repulsively low and selfish. Amid the intrigues of the piece, there stands glitteringly prominent the first of the brilliant series of Cibber's fops, Sir Novelty Fashion. This character he wrote for his own acting, and his success in it established him as an actor of the first rank. The interest of the audience in Sir Novelty does not centre in him as an unprincipled rake (he is, however, sufficiently unscrupulous), as it is attracted towards him as a "beau," a man of fashion, who

professes to see nothing tolerable in himself, solely in order to extort praise for his magnificence, from others. He is "ugly, by Gad!" he is a "sloven!" If he wears hundreds of yards of trimming, it is to encourage the poor ribband-weavers. If all the eminent tailors in town besiege his house, it is to petition him for the pattern of his new coat. He is the first man who was ever called "*beau*," which title he professes to prefer to "right honourable," for the latter is inherited, while the former is owing to his surprising mien and unexampled gallantry! He does not make love to a lady; his court is paid by indicating to her why she should love *him*. He judges of a man of sense by the fashion of his peruke; and if he enters a lady's apartment in an unpowdered periwig, she may rest assured that he has no designs on her admiration. Sir Novelty is one of those fine gentlemen who go to both theatres on the same evening; he sits with his back to the stage, and is assured that he looks like a gentleman; for, is he not endowed with a "fertile genius for dress?" Cibber, no doubt, had Crowne's Sir Courtly Nice in his mind, when he wrote Sir Novelty, "My linen," says Sir Courtly, "is all made up in Holland, by neat women that dip their fingers in rose-water at my charge." Southerne, who had read Cibber's play and liked it, was fearful of Cibber's own part in it. "Young man," said he, "I pronounce thy play a good one. I will answer for its success, if thou dost not spoil it by thine own action!" When the play was over, Nell Gwyn's old friend, Sackville, now Earl of Dorset, declared that "Love's Last Shift" was the best first play that any author, in his memory, had produced; and that for a young fellow to show himself such an actor, and such a writer, in one day, was something extraordinary." Colley nicely alludes to Dorset's known good-nature, and sets down the compliment not to his deserts, but to Dorset's wish to "encourage a young beginner." Cibber himself pronounced his comedy puerile and frothy. It is due to Cibber to say that, in this piece, his own part of Sir Novelty is never so prominent as to interfere unfairly with the other personages. The play itself, gross as it is, had a tendency towards reforming the stage. Cibber's self-imposed mission in this direction was consummated when he produced his "Careless Husband." The progress towards purity, made between Cibber's first and second comedy is marvellous. In the "Careless Husband" he produced a piece at which the most fastidious ladies of *those* times might sit, and listen to, unmasked. I say "listen," for the comedy is a merely conversational piece, sparkling with

wit, and with fewer lines to shock the purer sense than many an old play which still retains a place upon the stage. The descriptions here are as clever as the dialogue is spirited. If evil things come under notice, they are treated as people of decency would treat them, often gracefully, never alluringly. The incidents, told rather than acted, are painted, if I may so speak, with the consummate skill, ease, and distinctiveness of a most accomplished artist. The finest gentlemen are less vicious here than they are temporarily foolish; and one has not been long acquainted with Lady Easy, before the discovery is made that she is the first pure and sensible woman that has been represented in a comedy, since a world of time. There is good honest love, human weaknesses, and noble triumphs over them, in this piece. If Mr. Pope sneered at the author as a "dunce," which he was not, Mr. Pope's neighbour, Horace Walpole, has registered him rightly as a "gentleman," and traced his great success in describing gentlemen, to the circumstance of his constant and familiar intercourse with that portion of "society."

In this piece, there is the most perfect of Cibber's beaux, written for his own acting; and it is to be observed, that as time progressed and fashion changed, so did he observe the progress, and in his costume illustrate the change. Lord Foppington is a different man from Sir Novelty Fashion; my lord *does* make love to a lady. With a respectful leer, he stares full in her face, draws up his breath, and cries, "Gad, you're handsome." It is still in the fashion of Sir Courtly Nice, who characteristically exclaims, "If a lady fastens upon my heart, it must be *with her teeth!*" Sir Novelty is married, too, and has just sufficient regard for his wife to wish himself sunburnt if he does not prefer her to his estate. He talks French enough to cite an *à la* what d'ye call it; has Horace enough at his memory's ends to show his breeding, by an apt quotation; and he evidences his gentlemanly feeling, albeit a *fine*-gentlemanly feeling, on witnessing the happy union of the two wayward lovers (Lord Morelove and Lady Betty Modish), by the very characteristic exclamation;—"Stap my breath, if ever I was better pleased since my first entrance into human nature!" The example of comparative purity, set in this piece, was not immediately followed; but for that, Cibber is not to blame. The "Careless Husband" was produced in 1704, but nearly seventy years elapsed before Garrick refused to pollute the boards of Drury Lane, by re-producing, on Lord Mayor's Day, one of the most filthy of the filthy plays of Ravenscroft. The

critics of Cibber's time were unreasonable. Because he was sometimes an adapter, they called him an adapter always; and the reviewers, sick, sorry, nay maddened at his success, declared of his most original comedy, that it was "not his own." But they never had the wit to discover whence he had stolen it. For the taste and judgment of the second Mrs. Brett (the divorced Countess of Macclesfield), Cibber had the highest respect; and he consulted her on every scene of the "Careless Husband," as he wrote it. At some one of these consultations, he probably heard of the too great civility of the Colonel to his wife's maid, both of whom, Mrs. Brett once found fast asleep in two chairs. The wife was satisfied to leave token of her presence, by casting her lace handkerchief over her husband's neck. Of the otherwise painful incident she never took any notice; but Cibber incorporated it into his play, where it heightens the interest of one of the most interesting scenes.

Cibber was essentially a comic actor. His Richard partook very much of the manner of his Sir Novelty Fashion; and his "A horse! a horse!" used to excite the hilarity of his audience. He avows, gracefully enough, that his want of a strong and full voice soon cut short his hopes of making any figure in tragedy. He adds, "So strong, so very near indispensable, is that one article of voice, in the forming of a good tragedian, that an actor may want any other qualification whatsoever, and yet will have a better chance for applause than he will ever have, with all the skill in the world, if his voice is not equal to it." Colley admirably explains this, by adding, .. "I say, for *applause* only;—but applause does not always stay for, nor always follow, intrinsic merit. Applause will frequently open, like a young hound upon a wrong scent; and the majority of auditors, you know, are generally composed of babblers, that are profuse of their voices, before there is anything on foot that calls for them. Not, but I grant, to lead, *or mislead, the many*, will always stand in some rank of a necessary merit; yet, when I say a good tragedian, I mean one, in opinion of whose real merit the best judges would agree."

Cibber is so perfect as a critic, he so thoroughly understands the office and so intelligibly conveys his opinions, that it were well if all gentlemen who may hereafter aspire to exercise the critical art, were compelled to study his *Apology*, as medical students are to become acquainted with their *Celsus*. No one should be admitted to practice theatrical criticism who has not got by *heart*

Cibber's descriptions of Betterton and Mrs. Oldfield ; or who fail on their being examined as to their proficiency in the *Canons of Colley*. Then, if there be one circumstance more than another for which Cibber merits our affectionate regard, it is for the kindly nature with which he tempers justice, and the royal generosity which he displays in attributing alleged excellences in his own acting, to his study of the acting of others. If Cibber played Sparkish and Sir Courtly Nice with applause, it was owing, so he avows, to the ideas and impressions he had received from Mountfort's acting of those characters. Although his Richard was full of defects, yet he attracted the town by it. He assigns this attraction to the fact of his attempting to reproduce the style of one of the greatest of *Richards*,—Sandford. While praising others he is ever ready to disparage himself ; and he as heartily ridicules his insufficient voice, his meagre person, and his pallid complexion, as any enemy might have done for him He exalts the spirit, ease, and readiness of Vanbrugh, and denounces the puerility and frothy stage-language of his own earlier dramas, accepting heartily Congreve's judgment on "Love's Last Shift," which "had in it a great many things that were like wit, that in reality were *not* wit." He courageously pronounces the condemnation of his "Love in a Riddle," to be the just judgment of an enlightened audience. In the casting of a play, Colley was contented to take any part left to him, after the other great men had picked, chosen, rejected, and settled for themselves ; and a couple of subordinate characters in the "Pilgrim" were as readily undertaken by him, and as carefully acted, as his Richard, Sir Francis, or Master Slender. To his own alteration of Shakspeare's "Richard III.," he alludes with diffidence. There is no trace of self-complacency in his remarks. Colley's adversaries, however, have denounced him for this act as virulently as if he had committed a great social crime. But whatever may be said as to our old friend's "mangling of Shakspeare," the piece which he so mangled has ever since kept the stage, and it is Cibber's, not Shakspeare's, "Richard" which is acted by many of our chief players who have the coolness, at the same time, to protest that their reverence for Shakspeare's text is a pure homage rendered to a divine inspiration.

There were actors of Cibber's days who disliked to play villains like Richard, lest the audience should mistake the counterfeit for the real character. But if people thought Cibber vicious because he played a vicious fellow to the life, he took it as a compliment. "If the multitude were not in a roar," he says, "to see me in

Cardinal Wolsey, I could be sure of them in Alderman Fondlewife. If they hated me in Iago, in Sir Fopling they took me for a fine gentleman. If they were silent at Syphax, no Italian eunuch was more applauded than I, when I sung in Sir Courtly. If the morals of Esop were too grave for them, Justice Shallow was as simple and as merry an old rake as the wisest of our young ones could wish me." Cibber had a fine perception of the good and the true. That "The Beggars' Opera" should beat "Cato" by a run of forty nights does not induce him to believe that any man would be less willing to be accounted the author of the tragedy than of the opera, the writer of which, he says with some humour, "I knew to be an honest good-natured man, and who, when he had descended to write more like one in the cause of virtue, had been as unfortunate as others of that class." Colley had quite as just a perception of the different value of fair and unfair criticism. *Mist's Journal* was foremost in attacking Cibber and his colleagues, but "they hardly ever hit upon what was *really* wrong in us," says Colley, who took these would-be damaging paragraphs, founded upon hearsay, with perfect indifference. Wilks and Booth were much more sensitive, and preferred that public answer should be made: but Cibber, secure, perhaps too secure, he says, in his contempt for such writers, would not consent to this. "I know of but one way to silence critics of that stamp," he says, "which was, to grow insignificant and good for nothing, and then we should hear no more of them. But while we continued in the prosperity of pleasing others, and were not conscious of having deserved what they said of us, why should we gratify the little spleen of our enemies, by wincing to it, or give them fresh opportunities to dine upon any reply they might make to our publicly taking notice of them?" Cibber cared not for *Mist's Journal* while such a man as Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, made a friend of him. To this Duke, a dull Earl once expressed his opinion that Mr. Cibber was not sufficiently "good company" for his grace. "He is good enough for me," said the Duke; "but I can believe that he would not suit *you*."

Cibber originated nearly eighty characters during his career, from 1691 to his retirement in 1733. Among them are the grand old fops, the crafty or the inane old men, the dashing soldier, and the impudent lacquey. In tragedy, he was nearly always wrong. Of middle size, fair complexion, and with a shrill voice, apt to crack, and therefore to make him ridiculous in serious parts, he was, of "shape, a little clumsy," says one sketcher of his cha-

racter,—while, "his shape was finely proportioned," is the account of a second. Mr. Urban says, that when Cibber had to represent ridiculous humour, there was a mouth in every nerve, and he was eloquent, though mute. "His attitudes were pointed and exquisite; his expression was stronger than painting; he was beautifully absorbed by the character, and demanded and monopolised attention: his very extravagances were coloured with propriety." That the public appreciated him is clear, from the enthusiasm with which they hailed his occasional returns to the stage, between 1733 and 1745, when he finally withdrew, after acting Pandulph, in his "Papal Tyranny." His Shallow was especially popular. "His transition," says Davies, "from asking the price of ewes, to trite but grave reflections on morality, was so natural, and attended by such an unmeaning roll of his small pigs'-eyes, that perhaps no actor was ever superior in the conception and execution of such solemn insignificancy."

The general idea of Cibber has been fixed by the abuse and slander of Pope. In the dissensions of these two men, Cibber had the advantage of an adversary who keeps his temper while he sharpens his wit, and maintains self-respect while courteously crushing his opponent; but even Pope could praise the "Careless Husband." Cibber wrote the best comedy of his time; he was the only adapter of Shakspeare's plays whose adaptation survives; of all borrowers from the French, not one reaped such honour and profit as he did by his "Nonjuror," which also still lives in "The Hypocrite;" of all English managers, he was the most legitimately successful; and, of all English actors, he is the only one who was ever promoted to the laureateship, or elected a member of White's Club. If a sarcasm was launched at him on this account, he was the first to recognise it, by his hilarity. Further, when necessity compelled him to plead in person in a suit at the bar, his promptitude, eloquence, and modest bearing, crowned by success, demonstrated what he might have accomplished, had he been destined to wear the wig and gown. To sum up all,—after more than forty years of labour, not unmixed by domestic troubles, he retired, with an ample fortune, to enjoy which he had nearly a quarter of a century before him. Such a man was sure to be both hated and envied.

Of Cibber's being elected to White's Club, Davies remarks:—"He fared most sumptuously with Mr. Arthur (the proprietor), and his wife, and gave a trifle for his dinner. After he had dined, when the club-room door was opened, and the laureate was intro-

duced, he was saluted with the loud and joyous acclamation of 'Oh, King Coll! come in, King Coll! Welcome, King Colley!' And this kind of gratulation Mr. Victor thought was very gracious, and very honourable!" The men who gave it were peers and gentlemen;—Chesterfield and Devonshire, Cholmondeley and Rockingham, Sir John Cope, Mrs. Oldfield's General Churchill, and Bubb Doddington. With Chesterfield, Cibber was a favourite. Colley once came out of Lord Chesterfield's study, passing Johnson, who had been waiting an hour in the hall, and who, on seeing the player, left the house in disgust!

Among them all, Colley kept his own to the last. A short time before that last hour arrived, Horace Walpole hailed him, on his birthday, with a "good morrow," and "I am glad, sir, to see you looking so well" "Egad, sir," replied the old gentleman—all diamonded, and powdered, and dandified, "at eighty-four, it's well for a man that he can look at all." Therein lay one point of Cibber's character,—the making the best of circumstances.

And now he crosses Piccadilly, and passes through Albemarle Street, slowly, but cheerfully, with an eye and a salutation for any pretty woman of his acquaintance, and a word for any "good fellow" whose purse he has lightened, or who has lightened his, at dice or whist. And he turns into the adjacent square, and as his servant closes the door, after admitting him, neither of them wots that the master has passed over the threshold, for the last time, a living man. In December, 1757, I read in contemporary publications, that there "died at his house in Berkeley Square, Colley Cibber, Esq., Poet Laureate" A large fraction of the London population looked on, while Colley Cibber was carried to sleep with kings and heroes in Westminster Abbey. The general conclusion seems to have been that he was a well-abused man, who would speedily be forgotten. To this, it may be replied, that in spite of the abuse, often little merited, he was an eminently successful man throughout life; and accomplished a career, achieved (and scattered) a fortune, and built up a fame which will always render him an object of interest. A little too careless, perhaps; rather too much given to gambling and philandering; and somewhat more than might be of the young beau about him, even in his old days.

At the period of his death, his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Susanna Cibber, was enchanting the town with her Isabella, played to Garrick's Biron; and Barry and Mrs. Bellamy were raising melo-

dious echoes within the walls of Covent Garden. Colley's son, Theophilus, was hanging about town, without an engagement, and in a fine suit of clothes. Colley had, once, thus seen him, and had saluted him with a contemptuous, "I pity you!" "You had better pity my tailor!" said the son, who was then challenging Garrick to play with him, the same parts, alternately! Then, while the body of the Poet Laureate was being carried to Westminster Abbey, there was, up away in a hut in then desolate Clerkenwell, and starving, Colley's own daughter Charlotte Charke. Seven and twenty years before, she had first come upon the stage, after a stormy girlhood, and something akin to insanity strongly upon her. Her abilities were fair, her opportunities great, but her temper rendered both unavailable. She had a mania for appearing in male characters on, and in male attire off, the stage. By some terrible offence she forfeited the recognition of her father, who was otherwise of a benevolent disposition; and friendless, she fought a series of battles with the world, and came off in all more and more damaged. She starved with strollers, failed as a grocer in Long Acre, became bankrupt as a puppet-show proprietor in James Street, Haymarket; re-married, became a widow a second time, was plunged into deeper ruin, thrown into prison for debt, and released only by the subscriptions of the lowest, but not least charitable, sisterhood of Drury Lane. Assuming male attire, she hung about the theatres for casual hire, went on the tramp with itinerants, hungered daily, and was weekly cheated, but yet kept up such an appearance that an heiress fell in love with her, who was reduced to despair when Charlotte Charke revealed her story, and abandoned the place. Her next post was that of valet to an Irish lord, forfeiting which, she and her child became sausage-makers, but could not obtain a living; and then Charlotte Charke cried "Coming, coming, sir!" as a waiter at the King's Head Tavern, Mary-le-Bone. Thence she was drawn by an offer to make her manager of a company of strolling players, with whom she enjoyed more appetite than means to appease it. She endured sharp distress, again and again; but was relieved by an uncle, who furnished her with funds, with which she opened a tavern in Drury Lane, where, after a brief career of success, she again became bankrupt. To the regular stage she once more returned, under her brother Theophilus, at the Haymarket; but the Lord Chamberlain closed the house, and Charlotte Charke took to working the wires of Russell's famous puppets in the Great Room, still existing in Brewer Street. There was a gleam of good fortune for her; but it soon faded away, and then for

nine miserable years this clever, but most wretched of women, struggled frantically for bare existence, among the most wretched of strollers, with whom she endured unmitigated misery. And yet Cibber's erring and hapless daughter contrived to reach London, where, in 1755, she published her remarkable autobiography, the details of which make the heart ache, in spite of the small sympathy of the reader for this half-mad creature. On the profits of this book she was enabled to open, as *Landlord*, a tavern at Islington; but, of course, ruin ensued; and in a hut, amid the cinder heaps and worse refuse in the desolate fields, she found a refuge, and even wrote a novel, on a pair of bellows in her lap, by way of desk! Here she lived, with a squalid handmaiden, a cat, dog, magpie, and monkey. Humbled, disconsolate, abandoned, she readily accepted from a publisher who visited her, £10 for her manuscript. This was at the close of the year 1755, and I do not meet with her again till 1759, two years after her father's death, when she played Marplot, in the "Busy Body," for her own benefit, at the Haymarket, with this advertisement:—"As I am entirely dependant on chance for a subsistence, and desirous of settling into business, I humbly hope the town will favour me on the occasion, which, added to the rest of their indulgences, will be ever gratefully acknowledged by their truly obliged and obedient servant, Charlotte Charke." She died on the 6th of April, 1760. Her father was then sleeping in Westminster Abbey; her brother Theophilus was at the bottom of the Irish Sea, with a shipful of Irish peers, English players, pantomimists, and wire-dancers; and her sister-in-law, Susanna Cibber, was playing Juliet to Garrick's Romeo, and approaching the time when she was to be carried to Westminster also. Cibber had other daughters besides that audacious Charlotte, who is said to have once given imitations of her father on the stage; to have presented a pistol at, and robbed him on the highway, and to have smacked his face with a pair of soles out of her own basket. Let us part kindly with this poor woman's father. Of him, a writer has sarcastically remarked, that he praised only the dead, and was for ever attacking his contemporaries! He who refrained from evil speaking against those who could no longer defend themselves, and who flung the shafts of his wit and satire only at those who had tongues wherewith to reply, was in that much a true and honest fellow. "Mr. Cibber, I take my leave of you with some respect!" It is none the less for the satire of the "Craftsman," who ordered the players to go into mourning for the defunct manager; the actresses to wear black capuchins, and the men of the company "dirty shirts!"

CHAPTER XXX.

ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

At the close of the season 1757-8, Barry and Woodward proceeded to Dublin. At Drury, Garrick brought out Home's "Agis," with a cast including himself, Mossop, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Yates! The piece failed notwithstanding. Gray compared it to an antique statue which Home had painted white and red, and dressed in a negligée, made by a York mantuamaker! Murphy felt his way towards comedy illustrative of character, in his "Upholsterer, or What Next?" in which Garrick acted Pamphlet, as carefully as he did Ranger or King Lear. Garrick next replaced Woodward by O'Brien, who, in 1758-9, made his appearance as Captain Brazen, and, by the graceful way in which he drew his sword, charmed all who were not aware that his father was a fencing master. Garrick then acted Antony to the Cleopatra of Mrs. Yates, but they gained more laurels as Zamti and Mandane in the "Orphan of China," a tragedy, wherein small matters are handled in a transcendental style, but which lifted Mrs. Yates to an equality with Mrs. Cibber.

Then, Foote played Shylock! Wilkinson delighted everybody by his imitations, and Garrick took the "Pupille" of the Gallo-Irish Fagan, and polished it into the "Guardian," in which his Heartly showed what a man of genius could make of so small a part. Mozeen, who had left the law for the stage, found a bright opportunity for Miss Barton in his "Heiress;" and Dr. Hill showed the asinine side of his character by describing his farce of the "Route" as by "a person of honour!"—

> "For physic and farces, his equal there scarce is;
> His farces are physic, his physic a farce is!"

So wrote Garrick of Hill, who had been a clever man, but for his conceit.

Dodsley's "Cleone," rejected by Garrick, became the distinction of the Covent Garden season of 1758-9. "Cleone" is a romantic tragedy. The time is that of the Saracenic invasion of France, and the story is of a faithful young wife and mother who suffers under unmerited charges of treason to her absent husband and her home. Dr Johnson said it was the noblest effort made since the time of Otway! but Lord Chesterfield complained that the actors shouted the *oy* in the name of Sifroy as though they were crying *oysters* Dodsley "piled the agony," skilfully, and Mrs. Bellamy made hearts ache and eyes weep, for many successive glorious and melancholy nights.

On the retirement of Barry from London, Garrick travelled abroad, for a year, to recruit his health. No great tragic actor arose to seize the wreath of either of the absent tragedians, though the town was seduced from its respective allegiances, for a moment, by the advent and bright promise of young Powell. Walpole was eager to recognise a greater than Garrick in the aspiring city clerk, who, as an actor, said Sterne, "had more smoke than fire."

No tragic poet of eminence arose, nor did any old one increase his reputation. Home's "Siege of Aquileia" failed. Brookes's "Earl of Essex" was playfully crushed by Johnson. "Who rules o'er freemen should himself be free," was a line cited for its beauty, by Sheridan, the actor. "Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat," was the stupid comment of the lexicographer.

Farce flourished within this period,—supplied by the Rev. Mr. Townley, Garrick, Foote, Colman, Macklin, Reed, and Murphy, the last of whom increased his fame by the monotonously bustling comedies, "All in the Wrong," and the "Way to Keep Him" The authors of this period sought to correct faults and not to laugh at them. This, perhaps, gives a didactic turn to the plays of Murphy and Mrs. Sheridan. But new brilliancy was found in Colman's "Jealous Wife," in which Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard were the Mr. and Mrs. Oakley, and the "Clandestine Marriage," in which the noblest of old beaux has been the heritage only of the most finished of our comedians, from King, with whom it originated, down to Farren, with whom it seems to have died. Then Whitehead, in his "School for Lovers," wrote a dull play on society to show that society was dull; and Opera made way, especially at Covent Garden, where Beard, and Arne's famous pupil, Miss Brent, sung in Bickerstaffe's operas, and the lady warbled with a joyousness that never dreamed of the coming

penury and hunger. Managers, too, catered drolly for the public, and when Mossop acted Richard III., Signor Grimaldi danced comic dances between the acts! During Barry's absence, David acted several original characters, among them, Sir Anthony Branville ("Discovery"), in which "he seemed utterly to have extinguished his natural talents, assuming a dry, stiff manner, with an immoveable face, and thus extracted from his pedantic object (who assumed every passion, without showing a spark of any in his action or features) infinite entertainment."

During Barry's absence, some excellent actors took their last farewell of the English stage. First, went Ryan, the last of the players who had been contemporary with Betterton. He was but a mere boy when he first appeared with Betterton (who was playing Macbeth) as Seyton, wearing a full-bottomed wig, which would have covered two such heads as his. Between this inconvenience, and awe at seeing himself in presence of the greatest of English actors, the embarrassed boy hesitated, but the generous old actor encouraged him by a look, and young Ryan became a regularly engaged actor. From first to last he continued to play young parts, and to that last he could portray the fury of Orestes, the feeling of Edgar, the sensibility of Lord Townly, the grief and anger of Macduff, the villany of Iago, the subtilty of Mosca, the tipsyness of Cassio, the spirit of young Harry, the airiness of Captain Plume, and the characteristics of many other parts, with great effect, in spite of increasing age, some infirmities, and a few defects and oddities.

In the following year, died Rich, the father of Harlequins, in England. He has never been excelled by any of his sons. Rich (or Lun, as he called himself) was agile, but he possessed every other qualification; and his mute Harlequin was eloquent in every gesture. He made no motion, by head, hand, or foot, but something thereby was expressed intelligibly. Feeling, too, was pre-eminent with this expression; and he rendered the scene of a separation with Columbine as graceful as it was affecting. Not only was he thus skilled himself, but he taught others to make of silent but expressive action the interpreter of the mind. His action was in as strict accordance with the sentiment he had to demonstrate, as that of Garrick himself. The latter, in his prologue to "Harlequin's Invasion," feelingly alluded to the then defunct hero.

Rich, thought himself a better actor than mimic, and he had his little jealousies. He was angry when the combination of

Garrick and Quin filled his house and treasury, and when the season of 1746-7 yielded him a profit of nearly £9000, to which his wand of Harlequin had contributed little or nothing. He was wont to look at the packed audience, through a hole in the green curtain, and then murmur, "Ah! you are there, are you? much good may it do you!" In Rich's day, pantomimes went through, not merely a part of one, but several seasons. Theobald's "Harlequin Sorcerer," which had often filled "Lincoln's Inn Fields," was more attractive at "Covent Garden," a quarter of a century later The company assembled at mid-day, and sometimes broke the doors open, unless they were opened to them, by three o'clock, and so took the house by storm. Those who could not gain admittance, went over to Drury Lane, but Garrick found them without heart for tragedy; the grown-up masters and misses had been deprived of their puppet show and rattle, and were sulky accordingly; he had to exclaim:—"If you won't come to Lear and Hamlet, I must give you Harlequin;" and he gave them the best the stage ever had, save Rich, in Woodward, who had worn the party-coloured jacket before, but who, in "Queen Mab," and in speaking Harlequins, exhibited an ability, the effect of which is illustrated in a contemporary print, wherein you see all the great actors of the day in one scale, and Harlequin Woodward in the other, who makes them kick the beam.

Rich thought himself as good an actor as Garrick! "You should see *me* play Richard!" was his cry. Nevertheless, he was supreme, in his own particular line. His "catching the butterfly," and his "statue scene" people went to see because of their excellence. Still finer was that in which Harlequin is hatched from the egg by the heat of the sun. Jackson calls it a masterpiece in dumb show; "from the first chipping of the egg, his receiving of motion, his feeling of the ground, his standing upright, to his quick harlequin trip round the empty shell, through the whole progression, every limb had its tongue, and every motion a voice which spoke with most miraculous organ to the understandings and sensations of the observers. We should misjudge Rich if we looked on him as the founder of the modern harlequinade. This sort of entertainment deteriorated soon after his death. In 1782, Walpole saw the pantomime of "Robinson Crusoe," and his comment is, "how unlike the pantomimes of Rich, which are full of wit, and coherent, and carried on a story." Nearly all managers depend on them as the chief means

of making a season profitable. In the palmy days of Covent Garden, when Mr. Beverley left to "go into management," Harris told him that a successful pantomime alone made a thoroughly profitable season. Rich left Covent Garden to his son-in-law, Beard, the vocalist. Beard held Covent Garden, for himself and second wife, under a not unpleasant restriction. Rich directed that the property should be sold, whenever £60,000 could be got for it; and for that handsome sum the house was, ultimately, made over to Colman, Harris, and their partners.

In the studio of Miss Read, the portrait-painter, on a February morning of 1764, a young couple are conversing confidentially in one corner of the room while discreet Miss Read plies her work in another. The lady is Lady Susan Fox Strangways; the gentleman is one of the airiest actors of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Mr. O'Brien. A few days later, when she became of age, a couple of chairmen were carrying her to Covent Garden Church, where Mr. O'Brien was waiting for her, and, the wedding ceremony being performed, the happy and audacious pair posted down to the bridegroom's villa at Dunstable. This ended O'Brien's theatrical career of about eight years; and therewith departed from the stage the most powerful rival Woodward ever encountered upon it; and the original actor of Lord Trinket, in the "Jealous Wife."

O'Brien's marriage caused a sensation in the Fashionable World, and brought sorrow to some parties. In 1764, Walpole writes to Lord Hereford, "Poor Lady Susan O'Brien is in the most deplorable situation, for her Adonis is a Roman Catholic, and cannot be provided for out of his calling." As O'Brien had not the means whereby to live without acting, his wife's noble family thought it would be no disgrace, to *hide* the disgrace which had fallen upon it, by providing for the young couple—at the public expense. Accordingly, a grant of lands in America was procured for them, and thither they went. On Christmas Day, 1764, Charles Fox writes of his cousin, to Sir George Macartney: —"We have heard from Lady Susan since her arrival at New York. I do not think they will make much of their lands, and I fear it will be impossible to get O'Brien a place." The Board of Ordnance ultimately provided for O'Brien, and the player and his wife were away seven or eight years, beyond the Atlantic. They returned to England, without leave asked of the Board. In the *Last Journals of Horace Walpole*, which I edited in 1858, the Journalist says:—"O'Brien received orders, among the rest, to

return, but he refused. Conway declared they would dismiss him. Lord and Lady Holland interposed; but Conway was firm, and he turned out O'Brien." O'Brien failing to obtain a post, turned his attention to writing for the stage, and on the night of December 8, 1772, he produced two pieces—at Drury Lane, his comedy of "The Duel;" at Covent Garden, his *comedietta*, "Cross Purposes." The first is an adaptation of the "Philosophe sans le savoir." It failed, through the mawkish, sentimental scenes which the adapter worked in, at the suggestion of some of his noble relatives, who spoiled his play, but made him pecuniary compensation for its ill-fortune. "Cross Purposes," also an adaptation—from "Les trois frères rivaux,"—was more lucky. It was levelled at the follies of the day, and every one was amused by the light satire. In the first piece, Barry was sublime in his affectation of cheerfulness, on his daughter's wedding-day, while his son is engaged in a duel fought under paternal sanction. In the second, Shuter as Grub, and Quick as Consol, made the house hilarious. O'Brien subsequently became "William O'Brien, of Swinsford, County of Dorset, Esq.," and a little ashamed of his old vocation.—But I hear a cry of anguish from Garrick;—it is uttered at the falling away of one of the brightest jewels of the stage.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUSANNA MARIA CIBBER.

"MRS. CIBBER dead!" said Garrick, "then tragady has died with her." But when he uttered this, on the 31st of January, 1766, a young girl, named Sarah Kemble, then in her twelfth year, was a strolling actress, playing juvenile tragedy, and light opera, reciting or singing between the acts, and preparing herself for greatness.

Let us look back to the early time and the room over the upholsterer's shop, in King Street, Covent Garden, where Tom Arne and his sister, Susanna Maria, are engaged in musical exercises. Tom ought to have been engrossing deeds, and that fair and graceful, and pure-looking girl, to be thinking of anything but coming out in opera. The old Roman Catholic upholsterer had been sorely tried by the heterodox inclinations of his children. They lived within sound of the musical echoes of the theatres, and thereof came Dr. Arne, the composer, and his sister, the great singer, the greater and ever youthful actress.

In 1732, Susanna Maria Arne appeared successfully in Lampe's serious opera, "Amelia," which was "set in the Italian manner," and brought out at what was called the "French Theatre," in the Haymarket. Miss Arne was then about twenty years of age, with a symmetry of figure and a sweetness of expression which she did not lose during the four-and thirty years she continued on the stage. In her early days, her Venus was a beautiful impersonation, and her Psyche was as timid, touching, and enquiring, as she who charmed the gods from the threshold of Olympus.

It is not pleasant to think that on a young creature so fair, bright, pure, and accomplished, an honest man's honest daughter, such a sorry rascal as Ancient Pistol,—(Theophilus Cibber, in fact,) should have boldly cast that one of his two squinting eyes, which

he could bring to bear with most effect upon a lady. When, as a newly-married couple, they stood before Colley Cibber, they must have looked like Beauty and the Beast!

Beauty soon overcame the elder Cibber's antipathy. Colley could not withstand the new magic to which he was subjected; and when it was first proposed that the brilliant vocalist should become a regular actress, Colley, however much he may have shaken his head, at first, favoured the design, and gave all necessary instructions to his winning, beautiful, and docile daughter-in-law. Can you not see the pair in that first floor in Russell Street? Half the morning, she has been repeating Zara, never wearied by Cibber's frequent interruptions. Perseverance was one of her great characteristics; and she carries herself, and sweeps by with her train, and speaks meltingly or sternly, in grief or in anger; her voice silvery and modulated, and under command, a voice in the very sound of which there were smiles or tears, sunshine or storm. All this she does, or exercises, at Colley's sole suggestions, you suppose. Not a bit of it! Susanna Cibber has a little will of her own; and she is quite right, for she has as much intellect as will, and, docile as she is when she sees the value of Colley's teaching, she supports her own views when she is satisfied that these are superior to the ideas of the elderly gentleman who, standing in an attitude for imitation, to which she opposes one of her own, lets the frown on his brow pass off into a smile, as he protests, "foregad!" that the saucy thing could impart instruction to himself.

On the 12th of January, 1736, the great attempt was made, and Mrs. Cibber came out as Zara, to the Lusignan of Milward, the Nerestan of her husband, and the Selima of Mrs. Pritchard, who had not yet reached the position which this young actress occupied at a bound, but beyond which Mrs. Pritchard was destined yet to go. For fourteen consecutive nights, Susanna drowned houses in tears, and stirred the very depths of men's hearts, even her husband's, who was so affected that he claimed, and obtained, the doubling of the salary first agreed on for his wife. Theophilus, of course, did not keep the money; he spent it all, to his great, temporary, satisfaction. His wife's next appearance was in comedy,—Indiana ("Conscious Lovers"), where the neat simplicity of her manners, and the charm which she seemed to shed on even common-place expressions, formed a strong contrast to the more solemn dignity of her tragedy queens, the glory of which faded before the perfection of her Ophelia. For this character,

her voice, musical qualities, her figure, and her inexpressibly sweet features, all especially suited her. Wilkinson states that no eloquence could paint her distressed and distracted look, when she said : "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be!" Charming in all she undertook, her critics pronounced her unapproachable in Ophelia, and of all the traditions of the stage, there is not one more abiding than that which says that Mrs. Cibber was identified with the distraught maiden. Her Juliet, Constance, Belvidera, exhibited rare merits, while as Alicia, in the mad scene, "the expression of her countenance, and the irresistible magic of her voice, thrilled to the very soul of her whole audience," says Murphy. Wilkinson was powerless when attempting to mimic the voice and expression of Mrs. Cibber. The tone, manner, and method of Garrick, Quin, Mrs. Bellamy, Mrs. Crawford (Barry), nay, even the very face of Mrs. Woffington, he could reproduce with wonderful approach to exactness. But Mrs. Cibber's excellence baffled him. He remembered her and it, but he could not do more than remember. "It is all in my mind's eye," he would say, with a sigh at his incapacity.

In fine ladies and in sprightly comedy,—save in the playful delivery of epilogues,—Mrs. Cibber comparatively failed. Among her original characters were the Lady, in "Comus," Sigismunda, Aspasia, in Johnson's "Irene," and Zaphira, in "Barbarossa." In these, as in all she played, Mrs. Cibber was distinguished for unadorned simplicity, artless sensibility, harmony of voice, now sweetly plaintive, now grandly powerful, and eyes that in tender grief seemed to swim in tears ; in rage, to flash with fire ; in dispair, to become as dead. Her beauty did not so much consist in regularity of feature as in variety and power of expression ; with this, she had symmetry of form ; and this, indeed, is true beauty. She preserved these gifts which age lightly touched, and to the last it was impossible to look at her figure and not think her young, or view her face and not consider her handsome.

When Rich sent her, in 1752, to France, to negotiate for him there, with French dancers, the papers remarked, "In politics much is always done by fine women." Mrs. Cibber, would, perhaps, have been one of the happiest women of her day, had she not been cursed with a husband who was no more made for her than Caliban for Miranda. Theophilus could not appreciate her but as a gold winner, and he so abused the treasure, of which he was unworthy, as to expose her to temptations by which that unhanged villain hoped to profit ; but by yielding to which she got

rid of her "most filthy bargain," lost little in the public esteem, and acquired a protector and a home, neither of which she ought to have wanted. There she enjoyed all the becomingnesses of life, save one; and she continued to act with better heart, but under physical infirmities which her physicians could not understand, nor her applauding audiences believe in, till death struck her down in the very midst of her labours.

She was not only of good heart to the last, but apparently as little affected by age as by her domestic trials. She wore spectacles? Yes! I confess that much. There she sits, somewhat past fifty, at Garrick's house, spectacles on nose, reading her part of Cœlia, in the "School for Lovers." Now Cœlia is but sixteen, and some one suggests, only seeing those spectacles, that it would be better to call her at least twenty-three. Mrs. Cibber looked up smilingly through her "glasses," quietly dissented, and when the piece was acted, she played the young and gentle Cœlia with such effect, that no one present thought of Mrs. Cibber being older than the part represented her to be.

King George III. has the reputation of having killed Mrs. Cibber, indirectly. His Majesty commanded the "Provoked Wife," in which she was to play Lady Brute. Ill health, for which the physicians could not account, had reduced her strength; but the Roman Catholic actress was determined to perform the duty expected from her, to that most Protestant King. But she never trod the stage again. The career which had commenced in 1732, closed in January 1766; and in the month following, all that was mortal of this once highly, but, perhaps, fatally-gifted lady, was entombed in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, not within the edifice, like Mrs. Oldfield, opposite Congreve's monument, but in the cloisters, whither had preceded her Aphra Behn, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and the father of the restored English stage, "Mr. Betterton, gentleman." Rather more than seven years had then elapsed since Theophilus Cibber had gone down, twelve fathoms deep, to the bottom of the Irish sea; and about the same time, short of a month or so, had gone by, since Colley Cibber had been brought hither to rest in the neighbourhood of once *real*, kings and queens.

The voice of Mrs. Cibber, the soul of Mrs. Pritchard, and the eye of Garrick, formed a combination which in one actor would, according to Walpole, render him superior to all actors the world had seen or could see. Hitherto it has *not* been seen. Gentle as Mrs. Cibber was, she could master Garrick himself. "She was

the greatest female plague belonging to my house," he once said, with the memory on him of the strong language of Kitty Clive, and the rough thrusts of other heroines. These he could parry, but not Susanna Cibber. "Whatever her object, a new part or a new dress, she was always sure to carry her point by the acuteness of her invention, and the steadiness of her perseverance."

Her misfortunes in life brought some affronts upon her. Thus, in October, 1760, she was at Bath, with Mr. Sloper, the "protector" of whom I have spoken, and their daughter, "Miss Cibber." The whole party went to the Rooms, where the young lady was led out to dance. She was followed by another couple, of whom, the lady protested against Miss Cibber being allowed to dance there at all. There would have been more modesty in this second young lady if she had been silent. There ensued a fracas, of course. Mrs. Delaney, in a letter to Mrs. Dewes, says that "Mr. Cibber collared Mr. Collett, abused him, and asked if he had caused this insult to be put *on his daughter?* "Mr. Sloper" must be meant, for Theophilus was then dead. The affront was the result of directions given by that very virtuous personage, Beau Nash, then being wheeled about the room. Some discourse was held with the shattered beau, but nothing came of it; and pretty Miss Cibber never danced, or was asked to dance, at Bath again. This brings us back to the mother, from whom I am pleased to part with a pleasanter incident. Dr. Delaney once sat enraptured, as he listened to her in Dublin, singing in the "Messiah;" and, as she ceased, he could not help murmuring, "Woman, thy sins be forgiven thee!" *Amen!* And so passes away "the fair Ophelia," in that character, at least, never to be equalled. Mrs. Jordan approached her most nearly in that part. One critic (of 1797) thought her even superior to Mrs. Cibber in the bewitching tone and manner of her singing the old melodies in this part.

From Scotland Yard, where she died, the way was not long to Westminster Abbey Cloisters. With what rites she was committed to the earth, I cannot say; but a paper on the doors of the Roman Catholic Chapel, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, that day, requested you, "of your charity," to "pray for the soul of Mrs. Susanna Maria Cibber!"

Amen again! She was a woman more sinned against than sinning, and so well respected, that Mr. and Mrs. Garrick visited her and Mr. Sloper, at the country-house of the latter, at Woodhay; where Ophelia taught her parrot snatches of old tragedy,

and exhibited the bird to her laughing friends. The highest salary this "Tragic Muse" ever received was £600 for sixty nights; and this £10 per night was often earned under such tremor and suffering, that Mrs. Cibber would exclaim, with the applause ringing in her ears, "Oh! that my nerves were made of cart-ropes!"—But, we must leave her, for an actor who re-enters, and an actress who departs.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RE-APPEARANCE OF SPRANGER BARRY.—RETIREMENT OF MRS. PRITCHARD.

After playing some nights at the Opera House, in 1766, and with Foote at the little house in the Haymarket, in 1767, Barry and Mrs. Dancer,—the former after an absence of ten years,—appeared at Drury Lane in October of the last-named year. Direct rivalry with Garrick, there was none; for the latter and Mrs. Pritchard acted together on one night; Barry and Mrs. Dancer played their favourite characters the next. The two great tragedians acted in the same company till 1774, when Barry passed to Covent Garden, where he remained till his death, in 1777. "I hear the stage in England is worse and worse," wrote Fox to Fitzpatrick, from Nice, in 1768. I do not know what foundation there was for such a report, save that the school of sentimental comedy had then come in and established itself,—the founder being Kelly, an Irish ex-staymaker, and his essay being made with "False Delicacy." So firmly as well as suddenly had sentimental comedy come into fashion, that when Goldsmith's "Good Natured Man" (*Croaker*, Shuter) was produced in 1768, at Covent Garden, it nearly failed, through the scene of the bailiffs, which was considered too farcical for genteel comedy! and the moral Mrs. Sheridan's first comedy, "The Dupe," was condemned, for offences which it was said to contain against decorum.

Garrick rested on old triumphs; but he acted with Mrs. Dancer, now Mrs. Barry. Romeo dropped from the repertory of Garrick and Barry; but Lear and Macbeth were played by each of them to the Cordelia and Lady of Barry's wife, whose versatility was remarkable; for she was the *first*, the best, and the richest-brogued of Widow Bradys, as she was the most touching and dignified of Lady Randolphs. As Lord and Lady Townly, the Barrys drew great houses; but Garrick was not disturbed, for his Ranger and his Hamlet drew greater still; and none of the original charac-

ters played by Barry during his last engagement at Drury Lane, reached a popularity which could ruffle Garrick's peace of mind. The best of these was Evander (to his wife's Euphrasia), in the "Grecian Daughter," in which was exhibited the actor's mastery over the feelings of his audience.

Garrick then put "Hamlet" on the stage without the Grave-diggers and without Osrick! John Bannister restored them on playing the Dane, for his own benefit, in 1780. Old Wrighton, the prompter, said to him on that occasion, "Sir, if you should meet with Mr. Garrick in the next world, you will find that he will never forgive you for having restored the Grave-diggers to Hamlet!"

The most serious event, however, of this time, was the retirement of Mrs. Pritchard. She had well earned repose, after five and thirty years of most arduous labour. In 1733, Mrs. Pritchard, a young, and well-reputed married woman, was acting at our suburban fairs, but how much earlier, as Miss Vaughan does not appear. She did not at once win, but long worked for, her fortune. Her husband held a subordinate post in the theatre, till her talents raised him above it. Her life was one of pure unceasing labour; she was too busy to afford much material for further record, except for the unobtrusive virtue of her character. While Margaret Woffington was lamenting over the temptations to which she yielded, and George Anne Bellamy yielded without lamenting, honest Mrs. Pritchard neither yielded nor lamented. It is true, she was not so inexpressibly beautiful as Margaret, nor so saucily seductive as George Anne, but she carried with her the lustre of rectitude, and the beauty of honesty and truth; living, she was welcomed wherever virtue kept home; and dying, she left fairly-acquired wealth, a good example, and an irreproachable name to her children. Throughout her career, she originated every variety of character, from Selima, in "Zara," to Tag, in "Miss in her Teens," from Mrs. Beverley, in "The Gamester," to Clarinda, in the "Wedding Day;" from Hecuba to Mrs. Oakley!

The universality of Mrs. Pritchard's talents are alluded to in Whitehead's lines to Garrick. Melpomene says:—

> "'My Pritchard, too, in Hamlet's Queen,'
> The goddess of the sportive vein,
> Here stopped her short, and with a sneer,
> *My* Pritchard, if you please, my dear!
> Her tragic merit I confess,
> But surely mine's her proper dress."

We are so familiar with the prints of her as Hermione and Lady Macbeth, and to hear of her awful power in the latter, as well as of the force and dignity of her Merope, Creusa, and Zara, her almost too loud excess of grief in Volumnia, and the absolute perfection of her two queens, Katherine and Gertrude, that we are apt to remember her as a tragedian only. Her closet-scene, as the Queen in Hamlet, was so fine and finished in every detail, that its unequalled excellence remains a tradition of the stage, like the Ophelia of Mrs. Cibber. There was a slight tendency to rant, and some lack of grace in her style, which, according to others, marred her tragedy. On the other hand, there is no dispute as to her excellence in comedy, particularly before she grew stout; and, indeed, in spite of her becoming so, as in Millamant, in which, even in her latest years, her easy manner of speaking and action, charmed her audience, though elegance of form and the beauty of youth were no longer there.

As a perfectly natural actress, she was admirable in such parts as Mrs. Oakley, Doll Common, and the Termagant, in the "'Squire of Alsatia." With such characters she identified herself. I find her less commended in artificial ladies like Clarissa and Lady Dainty; and in queens of fashion, like Lady Townly and Lady Betty Modish. Yet, she was "inimitably charming" in Rosalind and Beatrice, in Estifania and Clarinda, in Mrs. Sullen and Lady Brute; and in all characters of intrigue, gaiety, wit, playfulness, and diversity of humour. Her distinguishing qualities were natural expression, unembarrassed deportment, propriety of action, and an appropriateness of delivery which was the despair of all her contemporaries, for she took care of her consonants, and was so exact in her articulation, that, however voluble her enunciation, the audience never lost a syllable of it. Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Abington were selected, at various periods, to represent the *Comic* Muse, and nothing can better indicate their quality and merits. Garrick, Quin, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Pritchard, acting in the same piece, at Covent Garden! No wonder that Walpole, in 1746, says, "Plays only are in fashion," and calls the company, which included Woodward, Ryan, and Mrs. Horton, as "the best company that, perhaps, ever were together." In Mrs. Pritchard's Beatrice, as in Mrs. Clive's Bizarre, Garrick, as Benedick to the first, and Duretete to the second, had an antagonism on the stage which tested his utmost powers. Each was determined to surpass the other; but Walpole intimates that Mrs. Pritchard won in *her* contest, and

states that Garrick hated her because her Beatrice (which Walpole preferred to Miss Farren's) had more spirit and originality than his Benedick. Walpole only smiled at her Jane Shore when she had become so fat, that for her to talk of the pangs of starvation, seemed ridiculous. But the highest mark of his estimation of this great actress consisted in his refusal to allow his "Mysterious Mother" to be acted, as Mrs. Pritchard was about to leave the stage, and there was no one else who could play the Countess.

Walpole knew her as a neighbour as well as a player, for Mrs. Pritchard purchased Ragman's Castle, a villa on the Thames, between Marble Hill and Orleans House, where she resided till Walpole took it of her, for his niece, Lady Waldegrave. The actress was occasionally his guest, and he testifies to the becomingness and propriety of her behaviour; but sneers a little at that of her son, the Treasurer of Drury Lane, as being better than he expected.

Johnson said that it was only on the stage Mrs. Pritchard was inspired with gentility and understanding; but Churchill exclaims,

> "Pritchard, *by Nature* for the stage designed,
> In person graceful, and in sense refined,
> Her wit, as much as Nature's friend became,
> Her voice as free from blemish as her fame,
> Who knows so well in majesty to please,
> Attempered with the graceful charms of ease?"

And contrasting her great qualities with the increasing figure which, perhaps, offended, in her later years, "the eye's too curious sense." Churchill adds,

> "But when perfections of the mind break forth,
> Honour's chaste sallies, judgment's solid worth,
> When the pure, genuine flame by Nature taught,
> Springs into sense and every action's thought,
> Before such merit all objections fly,
> Pritchard's genteel, and Garrick six feet high."

Mrs. Pritchard, *it is said*, had never read more of the tragedy of "Macbeth" than her own part, as it was delivered to her in manuscript, by the prompter, to be got "by heart." Johnson styled her "the inspired idiot,"—a strange sort of person, who called for her "gownd," yet whose acquired eloquence was beautiful and appropriate,—but how was poor Mrs. Pritchard to know anything of the chronology of the story, when Garrick played the

Thane in a modern gold-laced suit, and she herself might have called on the Princess Amelia, in her dress for the Thane's wife? Nevertheless, the incomparable two were as triumphant as if they had been dressed according to time and place. When her daughter first appeared as Juliet, Mrs. Pritchard as her mother, Lady Capulet, led her on the stage. The scenes between them were heightened in interest, for Lady Capulet hovered about Juliet with such maternal anxiety, and Juliet appealed by her looks so lovingly to her mother, for a sign of guidance or approval, that many of the audience were moved to tears. The house was moved more deeply still on an after night,—the 24th of April, 1768,—the night of Mrs. Pritchard's final farewell, when Garrick played Macbeth in a brown court suit, laced with gold, and she the "lady," with a terrible power and effect such as even the audiences of those days were little accustomed to. Her "Give *me* the dagger!" on that night, was as grand as her "Are you a man?" and when the curtain descended, such another intellectual treat was not looked for in that generation.

Her old admirers stood by their allegiance, and even Mrs. Siddons' Lady Macbeth, in long after years, could not shake it. Lord Harcourt, no lukewarm friend of Mrs. Siddons, missed in *her* Lady Macbeth "the unequalled compass and melody of Mrs. Pritchard." In the sleep-walking scene, his lordship still held Mrs. Siddons to be inferior,—there was not the horror in the sigh, nor the sleepiness in the tone, nor the articulation in the voice, as in Mrs. Pritchard's. In another scene, the reading of Mrs. Pritchard was superior to that of Mrs. Siddons. The latter, when Macbeth says, "If we should fail," answered "We fail!" as if there the matter ended. But Mrs. Pritchard, following the old punctuation, used to exclaim, "*We fail?*" "But screw thy courage to the striking place; and we'll *not fail!*"

Mrs. Pritchard retired to Bath to enjoy her hard-earned leisure; but met the not uncommon fate of those who withdraw from toil, to breathe awhile, and repose, in the autumn of their days. A trifling accident to her foot took a fatal turn, and in the August of the year in which she withdrew, she closed her honoured career. Her name, her example, and her triumphs, deserve to be cherished in the memory of her younger sisters, struggling to win fame and resolved not to tarnish it. Garrick's respect for her was manifested in the remark once made at the mention of her name: "*She* deserves everything we can do for her."

A critic in the *Times*, in reviewing the first edition of this book, described Mrs. Pritchard as of the *Garrick school!* and added, that she was displaced by Mrs. Siddons! With regard to the latter, it is only necessary to remark, that Mrs. Pritchard had been dead fourteen years, when Mrs. Siddons appeared in 1782, in *Isabella;* and that Mrs. Siddons, so far from displacing her, could never approach her, in versatility of power. Mrs. Siddons was a *tragic* actress, only. Mrs. Pritchard was a tragic actress too, but she was even *more* distinguished for her comedy. The town, we are told, was charmed to the last with her comic characters, all of which were above Mrs. Siddons's power. Mrs. Pritchard was inimitably charming in characters of intrigue, gaiety, mirth, wit, and pleasantry; Mrs. Siddons was dreary when she strove to be comic, and if she acted Lady Macbeth as well as her predecessor did, she could not, or at all events did not, compete with her, in Doll Common, and similar parts. With reference to Mrs. Pritchard being of the "school" of Garrick, this is incorrect. Garrick used to laugh at her old-fashioned "blubbering of the grief" in Volumnia. For nearly ten years before he appeared at Drury Lane, in 1742, she had played leading parts in every variety of piece. She had acted Ophelia to the Hamlet of Mills, and Edging to the Lord Foppington of Theophilus Cibber; Lappet to Griffin's famous Lovegold, and Silvia to Quin's Old Batchelor; Lady Macbeth to his Thane, Patch to Macklin's Whisper, Angelica to Woodward's Tattle, Ruth to Mrs. Macklin's Mrs. Day; and to other players of the time before Garrick, she had acted Desdemona, Viola, Rosalind, Nerissa, Mrs. Pinchwife, and many more, too numerous here to mention. Finally, when Garrick appeared, in 1742-3, at Drury Lane, the most finished actress of the day was engaged to play with him; and it was to her Monimia, in the "Orphan," that Garrick first acted Chamont, at a theatre under royal patent The young founder of a new school played with an accomplished actress who had been brought up in that of Quin and his contemporaries.

Miss Seward saw the three great actresses,—Cibber, Pritchard, and Siddons. She never forgot the clear, distinct, and modulated voice of Mrs. Pritchard, nor the pathetic powers, the delicate, expressive features, and the silvery voice, sometimes too-highly pitched, of Mrs. Cibber. Mrs. Pritchard's figure, we are told, was then "coarse and large, nor could her features, plain even to hardness, exhibit the witchery of expression. She was a just and spirited actress; a more perfectly good speaker than her

more elegant, more fascinating contemporary. Mrs. Siddons has all the pathos of Mrs. Cibber, with a thousand times more variety in its exertion, and she has the justness of Mrs. Pritchard, while only Garrick's countenance could vie with her's in those endless shades of meaning which almost make her charming voice superfluous, while the fine proportion and majesty of her form, and the beauty of her face, eclipse the remembrance of all her consummate predecessors." Tate Wilkinson states, in his memoirs, that Mrs. Siddons always reminded him of Mrs. Cibber, in voice, manner, and features.

Mrs. Pritchard's daughter failed to sustain the glory of her mother's name. The season of 1767-8 was the last for both ladies, as it was for Mrs. Pritchard's son-in-law, the first and more coxcombical of the two John Palmers. Mrs. Palmer was short, but elegant and refined; unequal to tragedy, except, perhaps, in the gentle tenderness of Juliet; she was a respectable actress in minor parts of comedy, such as Harriet ("Jealous Wife"), and Fanny ("Clandestine Marriage"), of which she was the original representative. Palmer died three months before his mother-in-law, at the early age of forty, leaving bright stage memories as the original representative of the Duke's servant, in "High Life below Stairs," Sir Brilliant Fashion, Brush ("Clandestine Marriage"), &c. His widow re-married with Mr. Lloyd, a political writer, and a *protégé* of Lord North.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAST YEARS OF GARRICK AND BARRY.

Before the period of Garrick and Barry drew to a close, the stage lost some good actors. Kitty Clive retired, and Holland died of small-pox, and of Powell's death. He was standing in the green-room, talking mournfully of his comrade. "The first time we played together, in private," he said, "I acted Iachimo to his Posthumus. When I first appeared in public, we performed the same characters; and they were the last we ever played together!" "And you are dressed for Iachimo, as you tell it," added a listener. Holland smiled sadly; and soon after he slept with his old play-fellow, Posthumus; dying at the age of forty. Love, in Falstaff, only inferior to Quin, died also about this time. Under that pseudonym he saved his father, the City Architect, the disgrace that might attach to him, if his son called himself by his proper name (Dance) on the stage. Of the acquisitions, the most notable was that of Lewis, who first appeared at Covent Garden in the season of 1773-4 as Belcour, and in light tragic parts.

This was the dramatic era of Kelly and Goldsmith, needy Irishmen, having many things in common, except talent, but being antagonistic as the upholders, Kelly of sentimental, Goldsmith, of natural comedy. Many of the dramatic poets toiled in vain. Hoole, the watch-maker's son, and translator of the Italian poets, produced "Cyrus" and "Timanthes." They are wrapped in oblivion. At Dow's "Zingis" the public laughed, more than they shuddered, and his "Sethona" even the two Barrys could not render endurable. Home fared as badly as Dow. His "Fatal Discovery," an Ossianic subject, was mounted with Roman costumes and Greek scenery, and the audience threatened to burn the house down if the piece was not withdrawn! Equally un-

successful was his "Alonzo" The story, as Walpole remarks, is that of David and Goliath, worse told than it would have been if Sternhold and Hopkins had put it into metre. Then, to a version of Voltaire's "Orestes," Mrs. Yates, as Electra, could not give life; and when Cradock gave to her all the profits he derived from his tragedy of "Zobeide," he showed his sense of that lady's value. Kelly gained nothing by his "Clementina," at which the audience yawned more than they hissed; and Colman kept the Fool from "King Lear," as being "such a character in tragedy as would not be endured on the modern stage!"

Garrick imposed on Barry the part of Tancred, in the "Almida" of Mallett's daughter, Madame Celisia. Cumberland laid as heavy a charge on him in his emendation of "Timon." Of other failures the succession is hardly broken by Mason's "Elfrida," Walpole's impressions of which may joyously close the tragic register of this period.

"The virgins were so inarticulate, that I should have understood them as well if they had sung choruses of Sophocles. Orgar (Clarke) had a broad Irish accent. I thought the first virgin, who is a lusty virago, called Miss Miller, would have knocked him down; and I hoped she would. Miss Catley looked so impudent, and so *manifestly* unlike the British virgin whom she was supposed to represent, you would have imagined she had been singing the 'Black Joke,' only that she would then have been more intelligible. Mrs. Hartley is made for the part (Elfrida), if beauty and figure would suffice for what you write; but she has no one symptom of genius. Still, it is very affecting, and does admirably for the stage, under all the disadvantages. The tears came into my eyes, and streamed down the Duchess of Richmond's lovely cheeks."

Mrs. Lennox now showed more dramatic power in her novels, and Mrs. Griffiths more good purpose in her hints to young ladies, than they did in their plays. Bickerstaffe, ex-page to Lord Chesterfield, in Dublin, and an ex-officer of marines, not yet compelled to fly the country in dishonour, gained some little renown by "Lionel and Clarissa," the "Padlock," and the "Hypocrite" (Cantwell, by King), which was a refitting of Cibber's "Nonjuror," with the addition of Maw-worm. Cumberland's "West Indian" and his "Fashionable Lover" have departed from the scene, with his "Brothers." All Cumberland's *dénouements* may be conjectured before the curtain falls on his second acts. He lacks that most at which he most aims,—facility to delineate character. He has less power of style than purity of sentiment. In all his fifty-

four pieces, he exhibits more regard for modesty than he furnishes matter for amusement. One of his cruel faults lay in the pertinacity with which he *would* read his plays to his suffering friends.

The one comedy of this period, which has *gloriously* survived all the rest, is Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer." There is nothing in it of the mawkishness of Kelly nor of the affectation of Cumberland. On the 15th of March, 1773, Johnson led a band of friends from the Shakspeare tavern, to Covent Garden, where he sat in the front of a side box; and as he laughed, the applause increased, till final triumph came to one, who showed that drollery was compatible with decency, and that high comedy could exist without scoundrelly fine gentlemen to support it. It gave good opportunities, also, to rising actors, who, on the refusal of Smith to play Young Marlow, and of Woodward to play Tony Lumpkin, were cast for those parts,—namely, Lee Lewes and Little Quick. Goldsmith did not venture to go down to Covent Garden till the fifth act was on, and then he heard the one solitary hiss, which was the exception to the universal applause, and which has been variously ascribed as issuing from the envious lips of Kelly or of Kenrick.

Sentimental comedy, ridiculed by Foote at the Haymarket, in his "Handsome House Maid, or Piety in Pattens," was dethroned, for a period, by Goldsmith's comedy. It was time. Sentiment had been carried to its utmost limits, in several now forgotten plays.

Perhaps one of the most important improvements in stage arrangements was made at Covent Garden, on the 23rd of October, 1773, when Macklin first appeared as Macbeth. All the characters were dressed in Scottish suits; but unfortunately, Macklin is said to have looked more like a rough old Scotch bagpiper, than the Thane of Cawdor, and King of Scotland. He hoped to snatch a triumph from Garrick: but, despite some good scenes, he failed. On the first two nights there was sibilation, which Macklin attributed to Reddish and Sparks, whose friends headed a riot, which was ended by Macklin, on his third appearance in the character, being driven from the stage, with much attending insult. A few nights later he was announced for Shylock and Sir Archy Mac Sarcasm; but he could not obtain a hearing, and in obedience to the commands of the audience, Macklin was discharged from the theatre! Against five of the rioters Macklin entered an action, and Lord Mansfield intimated that a jury would give heavy damages against men who had gone

to the theatre with a preconceived resolution of ruining an actor. Macklin interposed, offering to stop all further proceedings, if the defendants would pay the costs, spend £100 in tickets for his daughter's benefit, the same sum for his own, and a third for the advantage of the manager. And this was agreed to. "Mr. Macklin," said Lord Mansfield; "You never acted better."

The last brilliant years of Garrick, and of the majestic decline of Barry, ensued. With them the poets grew duller and more felonious. Dr. Franklin's "Matilda," Jephson's "Braganza," and other pieces of less note, were forgotten, in Garrick's Don Felix, played for his last benefit, on the 10th of June, 1776.

He had been accustomed to take his share in the country dance with which this comedy used to end, with unabated vigour, down to the latest period; and he delighted in thus proving that his strength and spirits were unimpaired. On this final night the dance was omitted, and Garrick stepped forward, in front of a splendid and sympathising audience, to take his one and final farewell. For the first time in his life he was troubled, and at this emotion, the house was moved too, rather to tears than to applause. He could pen farewell verses for others, but he could neither write nor deliver them for himself. In a few phrases, which were not so unpremeditated as they appeared to be, he bade his old world adieu! They were in simple and honest prose. "The jingle of rhyme, and the language of fiction, would but ill-suit my present feelings," he said; and his good taste was duly appreciated.

Meantime, at Covent Garden, the town damned, condoned, and finally crowned the "Rivals" of Sheridan; who showed that a young fellow of twenty-three could write a comedy, remarkable for wit, good arrangement of plot, and knowledge of men and manners. Hoole's dull "Cleonice," Hull's duller "Edward and Eleonora," and Mason's dullest "Caractacus," were neglected for the most popular of operas—Sheridan's "Duenna," which was acted seventy-five times in one season, eclipsing the glory even of the "Beggars' Opera."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DAVID GARRICK.

When Garrick commenced his career as actor, he was twenty-five years of age, and a very handsome fellow. Even in his apprentice time, he was an actor of force and intelligence. Three years before he appeared in Goodman's Fields, he played Chamont in the "Orphan," at a little theatre called "The Duke's," in Villiers Street, Strand. The tragedy was got up by, or for, the Eton boys; and Garrick acted so exquisitely, that the ladies offered him their purses and trinkets, from the boxes. In the first burst of his triumph, on the regular stage, Cibber thought the new player "well enough," but Foote, with the malice that was natural to him, remarked, "Yes, the hound has something clever, but if his excellence was to be examined, he would not be found in any part equal to Colley Cibber's Sir John Brute, Lord Foppington, Sir Courtly Nice, or Justice Shallow." "His reception" says the *Daily Post*, "was the most extraordinary and great that was ever known upon such an occasion, and we hear that he obliges the town this evening, with the same performance." The figure of Betterton looking down upon him from between Shakspeare and Dryden, on the ceiling of the theatre, may have stimulated him. Garrick's Hamlet placed him indisputably at the head of his profession, and his Abel Drugger and Archer fixed his pre-eminence in both low and light comedy. In the former comic part, he "extinguished" Theophilus Cibber. Garrick's Abel was awkward, simple, and unobtrusive; there was neither grimace nor gesticulation in it, and he "convinced those who had seen him in Lear and Richard that there was nothing in human life that such a genius was not able to represent." Yet he himself thought Weston's *Abel* superior to his own.

Walpole depreciated the fine actor systematically, but at the close of a score of years' familiarity with his acting, he rendered a discriminating judgment on him. "Good and various," the player was allowed to be, but other actors had pleased Walpole more, though "not in so many parts." "Quin, in Falstaff, was as excellent as Garrick in Lear. Old Johnson far more natural in everything he attempted. Mrs. Porter surpassed him in passionate tragedy. Cibber and O'Brien were what Garrick could never reach, coxcombs and men of fashion. Mrs. Clive, is, at least, as perfect in low comedy, and yet, to me, Ranger is the part that suited Garrick the best of all he ever performed. He was a poor Lothario, a ridiculous Othello, inferior to Quin in Sir John Brute, and Macbeth, and to Cibber in Bayes; and a woeful Lord Hastings and Lord Townly. Indeed, his Bayes was original, but not the true part; Cibber was the burlesque of a great poet, as the part was designed, but Garrick made it a Garretteer. The town did not like him in Hotspur, and yet I don't know if he did not exceed in it beyond all the rest. Sir Charles Williams and Lord Holland thought so too, and they were no bad judges." "I do not mention" he says, "the things written in his praise;—because he writes most of them himself." This last charge was also made in a pamphlet, said to have been by Foote. It is there asserted that Garrick had a share in the property, and influence in the management, of the *Public Advertiser*, the *Gazetteer*, the *Morning Post*, and the *St. James's Chronicle*. The critical and monthly reviews, he found *means* (we are told) to keep in his interest. The *Gentleman's Magazine* and *London Review* alone withstood him. His detractors were legion. They charged him with envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness, to his comrades; and when Wilkinson asserted the youthfulness of his look and action in his last years, his anonymous detractors, while they allowed that as Ranger, he mounted the ladder nimbly, professed to see that he was old about the legs. Is he a lover? they mock his wrinkled visage, and lack-lustre eye, in which softness, they say, was *never* enthroned; his voice is hoarse and hollow, his dimples are furrows, his neck hideous, lips ugly, "the upper one, especially, is raised all at once like one turgid piece of leather." In such wise, was he described just before he left the stage: and to embitter his retirement, he is told that his worst enemy has got famous materials for his "Life!" From first to last, did his enemies deny that he was influenced by worthy motives.

I have quoted what Walpole said of Garrick in his first year;—

this is what he says of him in his last: "I saw Lear the last time Garrick played it, and as I told him, I was more shocked at the rest of the company than pleased with him,—which I believe was not just what he desired; but to give a greater brilliancy to his own setting, he had selected the very worst performers of his troop; just as Voltaire would wish there were no better poets than Thomson and Akenside." This is not true. Garrick played with Smith and Bensley; Yates, Parsons, and Palmer; Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Yates, and, for a few nights, Mrs. Siddons. Even Johnson thought there was all head and no heart in his acting. While David was once playing Lear, Johnson and Murphy were at the wing, conversing in no subdued tone. As Garrick passed by them, he observed, "You two talk so loud, you destroy my feelings." "Punch has *no* feelings," growled Asper, contemptuously. He, perhaps, knew Garrick could be making faces and playing tricks in the midst of his finest points.

By pen, as well as by word of mouth, did Johnson wound the self-esteem of his friend. Although Boswell asserts that Garrick never forgave the pointed satire which Johnson directed against him, under the pseudonym of Prospero, the records of the actor's life prove the contrary. That it was something he could never entirely forget, is true. Garrick had, just before, exerted himself to render Johnson's "Irene" successful. And on the 15th February, 1752, on the morning of the night on which Garrick was to play Tancred, there appeared a paper in the *Rambler*, from Johnson's pen, in the two personages of which, no one could be mistaken. This attack was ungracious on one side, and undeserved on the other. But it did not move the player to ill-will. In the very next year, Garrick presented Johnson with a Malacca cane, on the gold top of which was engraved, "David Garrick to Samuel Johnson, 1753:" and on the rim, "Let him wear the laurel who deserves it." This cane was sold among the Bishop of Ely's effects in 1864. Years, later, when Johnson visited Garrick at his Hampton villa, the spirit of Asper, as he contemplated the beauty and grandeur around him, induced him to say: "These are the things, Davy, that make death terrible!" But Johnson, at last, allowed no one to abuse Davy but himself, and he then always mentioned that "Garrick was the most liberal man of his day." He was honest, too. "Terms made over our cups must be as strictly observed as if agreed to over tea and toast," was his maxim. His gallantry, also, was indisputable. When Mrs. Yates invited him to her house to discuss a treaty

touching "£800 a year, and finding her own clothes," he answered, "I will be as punctual as I ought to be, to so fine a woman, and so good an actress."

One of the critical years in the life of Garrick,—of whom Chesterfield always strangely asserted, that although he was the best actor the world had ever seen, he was *poor in comedy!*—was 1746, when he and Quin first appeared together, at Covent Garden, in the "Fair Penitent;" the night was that of the 14th of November. "The 'Fair Penitent,'" says Davies, "presented an opportunity to display their several merits, though the balance was as much in favour of Quin as the advocate of virtue is superior in argument to the defender of profligacy. . . . The shouts of applause when Horatio and Lothario met on the stage together, in the second act, were so loud and so often repeated, before the audience permitted them to speak, that the combatants seemed to be disconcerted. It was observed that Quin changed colour, and Garrick seemed to be embarassed; and it must be owned that these actors were never less masters of themselves than on the first night of the contest for pre-eminence. Quin was too proud to own his feelings on the occasion; but Mr. Garrick was heard to say, "Faith, I believe Quin was as much frightened as myself." Quin, striving to do too much, missed the mark at which he aimed. "The character of Horatio is compounded of deliberate courage, warm friendship, and cool contempt of insolence. The last, Quin had in a superior degree, but could not rise to an equal expression of the other two. The strong emphasis which he stamped on almost every word in a line, robbed the whole of that ease and graceful familiarity which should have accompanied the elocution and action of a man who is calmly chastising a vain and insolent boaster. When Lothario gave Horatio the challenge, Quin, instead of accepting it instantaneously, with the determined and unembarrassed brow of superior bravery, made a long pause, and dragged out the words, 'I'll meet thee there!' in such a manner as to make it appear absolutely ludicrous." He paused so long before he spoke, that somebody called out from the gallery, "Why don't you tell the gentleman whether you will meet him or no?" Cumberland tells us that "Quin presented himself, upon the rising of the curtain, in a green velvet coat embroidered down the seams, an enormous full-bottomed periwig, rolled stockings, and high-heeled, square-toed shoes. With very little variation of cadence, and in a deep full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action, which had more of the

senate than the stage in it, he rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference, that seemed to disdain the plaudits that were showered upon him. Mrs. Cibber, in a key high pitched but sweet withal, sang, or rather recitatived, Rowe's harmonious strain. But when, after long and eager expectation, I first beheld little Garrick, then young and light, and alive in every muscle and every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont and the heavy-paced Horatio (heavens! what a transition), it seemed as if a whole century had been swept over in the space of a single scene; old things were done away, and a new order at once brought forward, bright and harmonious, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age too long attached to the prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation." Foote's imitation of Garrick's dying scene in Lothario was an annoyance to Garrick and a delight to the town, particularly at the concluding words:—"adorns my tale, and che-che-che-che-che-cheers my heart in dy-dy-dy-dying!"

Quin had his turn of triumph when he played Falstaff to Garrick's Hotspur. After a few nights, Garrick resigned Hotspur, on the ground of indisposition, to Havard. The two great actors agreed to appear together as Orestes and Pyrrhus, and Cassius and Brutus; but Garrick did not like the old costume of Greece or Rome, and the agreement never came to anything.

It was long the custom to compare the French actor Lekain with Garrick. The two had little in common. Lekain, like Betterton, never departed from the quality of the part he was playing, even when off the stage. Garrick, like Charles Young, would forget Lear, to set a group in the green-room laughing at some good story. Lekain could not play a hundred different parts like Garrick, who identified himself with all; but he carried about with him a repertory of eight or nine characters, with half that number of costumes and a turban; and, with these parts, painfully learnt and elaborately acted, he enthralled his audiences. Voltaire protests that Lekain's means were as great, and his natural truthfulness of acting as undeniable as Garrick's; "but, oh! sublime Garrick!" exclaims Mercier, "how much more extended are thy means; how different thy truthfulness!" This truthfulness was the result of anxious care. Garrick spent two whole months in rehearsing and correcting his Benedick, and when he played it, all the gaiety, wit, and spirit seemed spontaneous. In Fribble, he imitated no less than eleven men

of fashion, so that every one recognised them; and in dancing, Mrs. Woffington could not excel him. "Garrick," says Mrs. Delaney, "is the genteelest dancer I ever saw." One of Garrick's characteristics was his power of suddenly assuming any passion he was called on to represent. This often occurred during his continental travels, when in the private rooms of his various hosts,—princes, merchants, actors,—he would afford them a taste of his quality, Scrub or Richard, Brute or Macbeth, and identify himself on the instant with that which he assumed to be. Clairon, the famous French actress, almost worshipped him for his good nature, and talent, particularly on the occasion when, in telling the story of a child falling from a window, out of its father's arms, he threw himself into the attitude, and put on the look of horror, of that distracted father. The company were moved to tears, and when the emotion had subsided, Clairon flung her arms round his neck, kissed him heartily, and then, turning to Mrs. Garrick, begged her pardon, for "she positively could not help it!" Of the French players, Garrick said that Sophie Arnould was the only one who ever touched his heart. To a young Englishman of French descent, subsequently Lord North's famous antagonist, Colonel Barré, whom he met in Paris, he said, on seeing him act in private, that he might earn a thousand a year, if he would adopt playing as a profession.

French *ana* abound with illustrations of Garrick's marvellous talent, exercised for the mere joke's sake. How he deceived the driver of a *coucou* into believing his carriage was full of passengers, Garrick having presented himself half a dozen times at the door, each time with a different face; how he and Preville, the French actor, feigned drunkenness, on horseback; and how Garrick showed that his rival, drunk everywhere else, was not drunk enough in his legs! But the greatest honour Garrick ever received was in his own country, and at the hands of Parliament. He happened to be sole occupant of the gallery in the Commons, one night of 1777, during a fierce discussion between two members, one of whom, noticing his presence, moved that the gallery should be cleared. Burke sprang to his feet, and appealed to the House; was it consistent with becomingness and liberality to disturb the great master of eloquence? one to whom they all owed so much, and from whom he, Burke, had learned many a grace of oratory? In this strain of praise, he was followed by Fox and Townshend, who described the ex-actor as their great preceptor; and ultimately, Garrick was exempted

from the general order that strangers leave the house! Senators hailed him as their teacher, and the greatest of French actors called him "*Master!*"

Garrick alone fulfilled all that Grimm's imagination could conceive an actor should be. The player's great art of identification astounded him, and Grimm truly observed, that all the changes in Garrick's features arose entirely from inward emotion;—that he never exceeded truth; and that, in passion alone, he found the sources of distinction. "We saw him," he says, "play the dagger scene in 'Macbeth,' in a room, in his ordinary dress, without any stage illusion; and as he followed with his eyes the air-drawn dagger, he became so grand, that the whole assembly broke into a general cry of admiration. Who would believe," he asks, "that this same man, a moment after, counterfeited, with equal perfection, a pastry-cook's boy, who, carrying a tray of tartlets on his head, and gaping about him at the corner of the street, lets his tray fall in the kennel, and, at first stupefied by the accident, bursts at last into a fit of crying?" Such was he who fairly frightened Hogarth himself, by assuming the face of the defunct Fielding!

Garrick's assertion, that a man must be a good comic actor to be a great tragedian, gave M. de Carmontelle the idea of a picture, in which he represented Garrick in an imposing tragic attitude, with a comic Garrick standing between the folding doors, looking with surprise, and laughing at the other. While the ever-restless actor was sitting for this, he amused himself by passing, through imperceptible gradations, from extreme joy to extreme sadness, and thence to terror and despair. The actor was running through the scale of the passions. Grimm observed, that Garrick's "studio" was in the crowded streets. "He is always there," writes Grimm, and, no doubt, Garrick perfected his talents by the study of nature. Of his personal appearance, the same writer remarks: "his figure is *mediocre;* rather short than tall; his physiognomy agreeable, and promising wit; and the play of his eyes prodigious. He has much humour, discernment, and correctness of judgment; is naturally *monkeyish*, imitating all he sees; and he is always graceful!" The desire to see him in Paris again was as strong as Mrs. Woffington's, who, being reminded by Sir C. Hanbury Williams, that she had seen Garrick that morning, exclaimed, "but that's an age ago!"

St. Petersburg caught the Garrick fever; but the offer of the Czarina Catherine, to give Garrick two thousand guineas for four

performances could not tempt him to the banks of the Neva. Denmark was fain to be content with his counterfeit presentment; and a portrait, painted in London, by order of the King was hung up in the royal palace, at Copenhagen.

In Garrick I find more instances of generosity than of meanness,—more of fairness of judgment than of jealousy. He was ever ready to play for the benefit of his distressed brethren. When Macklin lost his engagement under Fleetwood, Garrick offered to allow him £6 per week out of his own salary, till he found occupation. He saw, when his own triumph was in its first brilliancy, the bright promise of Barry; pointed out his merits, and predicted his success. To young Powell, he gave frequent instruction; and when he brought Dexter from Dublin, he not only gave him "first business," and useful directions, but expressed his convictions that, with care and dilligence, he would stand in the foremost rank of actors. When, during the run of the "Duenna," Garrick revived the "Discovery," by Sheridan's mother, and acted the principal part in it himself, the carpers exclaimed, that the mother had been revived in opposition to the son! When Rich and Garrick were rival managers, the wits quoted Lucretius, "Nec quenquam jam ferre potest Cæsarve priorem, Pompeiusve parem," and translated it, "Rich can no longer bear to see the house of Garrick fuller than his own, nor Garrick that of Rich so full!" Even Mrs. Siddons's disparagement of Garrick, tells in his favour. She played two or three nights with him, but her first appearances were failures. Garrick observed some awkward action of the lady's arms, and gave her advice how to use them. But Mrs. Siddons used to say: "He was only afraid that I should overshadow his nose." Years subsequently, Walpole remarked this very action of the arms, which Garrick had endeavoured to amend! To those who object that Garrick was personally vain, it may suffice to point out that he was the first to allude to his own defect of stature, in prologues written and spoken by himself. If he esteemed little of *himself* personally, he had, on the other hand, the highest estimation of his profession. He was often severe enough with conceited aspirants, who came to offer samples of their quality. He listened while he shaved, and he often interrupted them by imitative *yaw, yaws!* But when convinced there was stuff in a young man, Garrick helped him to do his best, without thought of rivalry. It is pleasant thus to contemplate him preparing Wilkinson, in 1759, for his attempt at tragedy, in Bajazet, to the Aspasia of Mrs. Pritchard.

Garrick heard him recite the character in his own private room; gave him some valuable advice; presided at the making up of his face; and put the finishing strokes of the pencil, to render the young face of one and twenty as nearly like that of the elder Oriental, as might be. He could make other and nobler sacrifices; on the last night he ever trod the stage, with a house crammed, with a profusely liberal audience, Garrick made over every guinea of the splendid receipts to the Theatrical Fund. He may have been as restless and ignorant as Macklin has described him; as full of contrasts and as athirst for flattery as the pencil of Goldsmith has painted him; as void of literary ability as Johnson and Walpole asserted him to be; and as foolish as Foote would have us take him for; his poor opinion of Shuter and Mrs. Abington may seem to cast reproach upon his judgment; and his failure to impress Jedediah Buxton, who counted his words rather than attended to his acting, may be accepted as proof that he was a poor player (in Jedediah's eyes); but the closing act of his professional life may be cited in testimony of a noble and unselfish generosity. It was the crowning act in a career marked by many generous deeds, but marred by many crosses, vexations, and anxieties.

Colman, even before he quarrelled with Garrick, libelled him; but Garrick, in return, wrote verses in praise of Colman's translation of *Terence;* and when these had softened the translator's resentment, Garrick wrote better verses, in memory of the restoration of their friendship. Garrick could yield, too, to the most exacting of his rivals. When Barry complained that Garrick only put him up to play on unlucky days, when operas, or concerts, or lady's drums, were a counter attraction, David kindly bade him select his own days; he himself would be content to play singly on the others. "Well, sir!" said Barry, "I certainly could not ask more than you grant!" When Sterne would, or could not, repay a sum of money which he owed to Garrick, and Birkett, Garrick's agent, urged compulsory measures; Garrick wrote, "Do not be ungentle with Sterne." Vanity, it has been said, was one of Garrick's weak points; but he was not so proud of the Prince of Hesse talking with him at Ranelagh, as people were of Mr. Garrick telling them what the Prince had said. His courtesy, discretion, justice, and firmness, are illustrated in a thousand ways, in his correspondence. His best actresses vexed him to the heart; but he never lost hist temper or his politeness with the most vexing or capricious of them all. His counsel to young

actors grasping at fame, was of the frank and useful nature which was likely to help them to seize it; and his reproof to foolish and impertinent players,—like the feather-brained Cautherley,—was delivered with a severity which must have been all the more stinging, as its application was as dignified as it was merciless. As for Garrick's professional jealousy, he seems to have had as little as was consonant with human nature. I know of no proprietor of a theatre, himself an actor, who collected around him such a brilliant brotherhood of actors as Garrick did; yet, when any one of these left him, or was dismissed by him, the partizans of the retiring player raised the cry of "*jealousy!*"

When Mallet was writing his *Life of the Duke of Marlborough*, he dexterously enough intimated to Roscius that he should find an opportunity of noticing in that work the great actor of the later day. The absurdity of this must have been evident to Garrick, who replied, "My dear friend, have you quite left off writing for the stage?" As Mallet subsequently offered to Garrick his reconstruction of the masque of "Alfred," and Garrick produced the piece, it has been inferred that the latter took the bait flung for him by the Scot. It seems to me that Garrick perceived the wile, but produced the play, notwithstanding. There was, perhaps, weakness of character in his obviating jokes on his marriage, by making them himself, or getting his friend, Edward Moore to make them, not in the most refined fashion. Sensitive to criticism no doubt he was; but he was more long-suffering under censure than Quin, who pummelled poor Aaron Hill in the Court of Requests, because of adverse comments in the *Prompter*. Sensitive as Garrick was, he could reply to criticism merrily enough. When Hill accused him of pronouncing the *i* in *mirth* and *birth* as if it were an *u*, Garrick pointed an epigram, by expressing a hope—"That I may be never mistaken for U." Again, if he were vain, he could put on a charming appearance of humility. Lord Lyttleton suggested to him that as a member of Parliament, he might turn his powers of eloquence to patriotic account. Such a suggestion would have fired many a man's ambition—it only stirred Garrick to write lines, in which he said that for him "To play the fool in Parliament," would be "Mistaking TIME, and PLACE, and CHARACTER!" Burke said of Garrick, that he was the first of actors, because he was the most acute observer of nature that Burke ever knew. Burke himself once wrote a tragedy; "Did you let Garrick see it?" said Fox. "No," said Burke, "though I had the folly to write it, I had the wit to keep

it to myself!" Garrick disliked characters in which there was a "lofty disregard of nature;" yet he resembled Mrs. Siddons in believing that if a part seemed at all *within* nature, it was not to be doubted but that a great actor could make something out of it. Garrick's repertory extended to less than one hundred characters, of which he was the original representative of thirty-six. Compared with the half century of labour of Betterton, and the number of his original characters, Garrick's toil seems but mere pastime. In his first season, on that little but steep stage at Goodman's Fields, so steep, it is said, that a ghost in real armour, ascending on a trap, once lost his balance and rolled down to the orchestra, Garrick seems to have been uncertain whether his vocation lay more with tragedy or with comedy. In the sum of the years of his acting, the increase of number is slightly on the side of the latter, while, of his original characters, twenty belonged to tragedy, and sixteen to comedy. After he had been two-and-twenty years on the stage, Garrick undertook no new study. Of his original characters, the best remembered in stage traditions are, Sharp, in the "Lying Valet," Tancred, Fribble, Ranger, Beverley, Achmet ("Barbarossa"), Oronooko (in the altered play), Lovemore ("Way to Keep Him"), and Oakley, in the "Jealous Wife." Of these, only Beverley and Oakley can be said to survive.

In June, 1749, Lord Chesterfield, who, in his Irish vice-royalty had neglected Garrick, just as in London he ignored Sheridan whom he had patronized in Dublin, wrote to his friend Dayrolles, "The parliament is to be prorogued next Tuesday, when the ministers will have six months' leisure to quarrel, and patch up and quarrel again. Garrick and the Violetta will likewise, and about the same time, have an opportunity of doing the same thing, for they are to be married next week. They are, at present, desperately in love with each other. Lady Burlington was, at first, outrageous: but, upon cooler reflection upon what the Violetta, if provoked, might say or rather invent, she consented to the match, and superintends the writings." Later in June, Walpole touches on the same subject to Mann, announcing the marriage itself, "first at a Protestant, then at a Roman Catholic chapel. The chapter of this history," he adds, "is a little obscure, and uncertain as to the consent of the protecting countess, and whether she gives a fortune or not."

Eva Maria Violetta was a dancer, who, three years previously to this marriage, was enchanting the town with her "poetry of

motion." The sister Countesses of Burlington and Talbot competed for her with "sullen partiality." The former carried her to Chiswick, wore her portrait, and introduced her to her friends. Lady Carlisle entertained her; and the Prince of Wales paid his usual compliment, by bidding her take lessons of Desnoyers, the dancing master, and Prince's companion,—which Eva Maria did not care to do. The public were curious to know who this beautiful young German dancer was, in whom Lord and Lady Burlington took such especial interest. That she was nearly related to the former was a very popular conjecture. However this may have been, she was, in many respects, Garrick's good genius, presiding gracefully over his households in the Adelphi and at Hampton. "Mr. Garrick," whose early residence was, according to the addresses of his letters, "at a periwig maker's, corner of the Great Piazza, Covent Garden," saw good company at Hampton, where Walpole cultivated an intimacy with him, for Mrs. Clive's sake, as he pretended. Here is the actor at home, on August 15th, 1755. "I dined to-day at Garrick's," writes Walpole to Bentley; "there were the Duke of Grafton, Lord and Lady Rochford, Lady Holdernesse, the crooked Mostyn, and Dabreu, the Spanish minister; two regents, of which one is Lord Chamberlain, the other Groom of the Stole, and the wife of a Secretary of State This being *sur un assez bon ton*, for a player. Don't you want to ask me how I liked him? Do want, and I will tell you. I like *her* exceedingly; her behaviour is all sense, and all sweetness, too. I don't know how, he does not improve so fast upon me; there is a great deal of parts, and vivacity, and variety, but there is a great deal, too, of mimicry and burlesque. I am very ungrateful, for he flatters me abundantly; but, unluckily, I know it." Fifteen years later, Mrs. Delaney describes a day at Garrick's house at Hampton, and speaks as eulogistically of the hostess. "Mr. Garrick did the honours of his house *very respectfully*, and, though in high spirits, seemed sensible of the honour done them. Nobody else there but Lady Weymouth and Mr. Bateman. As to Mrs. Garrick, the more one sees her, the better one must like her; she seems *never* to depart from a perfect propriety of behaviour, accompanied with good sense and gentleness of manners; and I cannot help looking on her as a *wonderful creature*, considering all circumstances relating to her." Lady Llanover, the editor of Mrs. Delaney's correspondence, says that, "few persons in Garrick's class of life know how to be '*respectful*,' and yet in '*high spirits*,' which is the greatest test of real refine-

ment." The lady forgot that Mr. Garrick was the son of an officer and a gentleman.

Walpole warned people against supposing that he and Garrick were intimate. He disparaged the latter, because Garrick thought little of Walpole as a dramatic writer. When the actor and his wife went to Italy.—"We are sending to you," wrote Horace to Mann, "the famous Garrick and his once famous wife. He will make you laugh as a mimic; and as he knows *we* are great friends, will affect great partiality to me; but be a little upon your guard, remember he is an *actor*." It is clear that Garrick, down at his villa, insisted on being treated as a gentleman. "This very day," writes Walpole to Mason, September 9, 1772, "Garrick, who has dropped me these three years, has been here by his own request, and told Mr. Raftor how happy he was at the reconciliation. I did not know we had quarrelled, and so omitted being happy too." Lord Ossory speaks of Garrick, Gibbon, and Reynolds, who were then his guests, as all three delightful in society. "The vivacity of the great actor, the keen, sarcastic wit of the great historian, and the genuine pleasantry of the great painter, mixed up well together, and made a charming party. Garrick's mimicry of the mighty Johnson was excellent." Garrick was the guest of Earl Spencer, (Christmas, 1778,) when he was attacked by his last and fatal illness. He was carried to his town house, No. 5, Adelphi Terrace, where Dr. Cadogan asked him if he had any affairs to settle. Garrick met the intimation with the calm dignity of Quin: "I have nothing of that sort on my mind," he said, "and am not afraid to die." Physicians assembled around him out of pure affection and respect; Haberden, Warren, and Schomberg. As the last approached, Garrick, smiling, took him by the hand, murmuring, "though last, not least in love." But as the crowd of charitable healers increased, the old player—who, wrapped in a rich robe, himself all pale and feeble, looked like the stricken Lusignan,—softly repeated the lines in the "Fair Penitent," beginning with, "Another and another still succeeds." On January 20th, 1779, Garrick expired. The great actor was solemnly carried to Westminster Abbey by some of the noblest in the land, whether of intellect or of rank. Chatham had addressed him living, in verse, and peers sought for the honour of supporting the pall, at his funeral. The players, whose charitable fund he had been mainly instrumental in raising to near £5000, stood near their master's grave, to which the statue of Shakspeare now

points, to do him honour. "His death," said Johnson, "eclipsed the gaiety of nations," which was nonsense. Walpole said, coldly, but correctly enough, "Garrick is dead; not a *public* loss. for he had quitted the stage."

They who had accused him of extravagance, were surprised to find that he had lived below his income. They who had challenged him with parsimony, now heard of large sums cheerfully given in charity, or lent on personal security; and the latter often forgiven to the debtor. "Dr. Johnson and I," says Boswell, "walked away together. We stopped a little while by the rails of the Adelphi, looking on the Thames, and I said to him with some emotion, that I was now thinking of two friends we had lost, who once lived in the buildings behind us. Topham Beauclerk and Garrick." "Aye, sir," said he, tenderly, "and two such friends as cannot be supplied!"

Mrs. Garrick wore her long widowhood till 1822, dying then in the same house on the Adelphi Terrace. She was the honoured guest of hosts whom all men honoured; and at the Bishop of London's table held her own, against the clever men and women who held controversy under Porteus's roof. Eva Maria Garrick twice refused Lord Monboddo, who had written a book to show that humanity was merely apedom without the tail. Garrick's house in the Adelphi is occupied by the Literary Fund Society; and the villa at Hampton was sold in June, 1864, to Mr. Grove, a tailor of advertising notoriety, for £10,800!

As I take leave of Garrick, I remember the touching scene which occurred on the last night but one of his public performances. His farewell to the stage was made in a comic character: but he and tragedy parted for ever, the night before. On that occasion he played Lear to the Cordelia of Miss Younge. As the curtain descended, they lay on the stage hand in hand, and hand in hand they rose and went, Garrick silently leading, to his dressing room; whither they were followed by many of the company. There stood Lear and Cordelia, still hand in hand, and mute. At last Garrick exclaimed, "Ah, Bessie, this is the last time I shall ever be your father; the *last time!*" and he dropped her hand. Miss Younge sighed, too, and replied affectionately, with a hope that before they finally parted he would kindly give her a father's blessing Garrick took it as it was meant, seriously; and as Miss Younge bowed her head, he raised his hands, and prayed that God would bless her! Then slowly looking round, he mur-

mured, "May God bless you all!" and, divesting himself of his Lear's dress, tragedy, and one of her most accomplished sons, were dissevered for ever! Of another accomplished son, however, who lingered somewhat longer on the stage, but passed earlier from life,—Spranger Barry,—we have now to take final leave.

CHAPTER XXXV.

SPRANGER AND ANNE BARRY.

Outside the five and thirty years of Barry's professional life, little is known of him. Spranger of the silver tongue, was the only actor who ever shook Garrick on his throne; but lacking the fulness of the perfection of Garrick, Barry only shook him for an instant; he never dethroned him. He is remembered as the vanquished wrestler is remembered, who has wrestled his best, given a heavy fall or two, has succumbed in the last grapple, and is carried from the arena, on loving arms, amid the acclamations of the spectators, and with the respect of his conqueror. In the Irish silversmith's accomplished son, born in 1719, there was good blood, with some of the disadvantages attached to that possession. Of fine personal appearance and bearing, an aristocratic expression, and a voice that might win a bird from the nest, Spranger Barry had too magnificent tastes. He was a gentleman; but he lived as though he were the lord of countless thousands; and with an income on which an earl might have existed becomingly, with moderate prudence, Spranger Barry died poor. From the first, Barry took foremost ground. Such a trio as Garrick, Barry, and Sheridan, together in one piece, when young, in the very brightest of their powers, rendered a stage illustrious. From 1747 to 1758, Barry was, in some few characters, the best actor on our stage. After the above period, came his brilliant but ruinous Irish speculation with Woodward. During the time of that disastrous Dublin management, Barry's powers were sometimes seriously affected. He has been depicted as reckless; but it is evident that anxieties were forced upon him, and a proud man liable to be seized by sheriffs' officers, ere he could rise from simulated death upon the stage, was not to be comforted by the readiness of his subordinates to murder the bailiffs! Mrs. Dela-

ney had been enraptured with him in his earliest years; but she found a change in him, even as early as 1759. In February of that year she saw the "*Mourning Bride*," in which Barry played Osmyn. She disapproved of his looks and his utterance; but adds: "Almyra was acted by a very pretty woman, who, *I think*, might be made a *very good actress*. Her name is Dancer."

Barry *did* make her an excellent actress, and his wife to boot. Nevertheless, the Dublin speculation failed; and I find something characteristic of it among the properties enumerated in the inventory of articles made over by Barry to his successor, Ryder. For instance:—"Chambers, with holes in them;" "House, very bad;" "One stile, broke;" "Battlements, torn;" "Garden wall, very bad;" "Water-fall, in the Dargle, very bad." The same definition is applied to much more property; with "woods, greatly damaged;" "clouds, little worth;" "wings, with holes, in the canvas;" or, "in bad order." "Mill, torn;" "elephant, very bad;" and Barry's famous "Alexander's car," is catalogued as "some of it wanting." Indeed, the only property in good order, comprised "eighty-three thunder-bolts!" Of Barry's wardrobe, he seems to have parted only with the "bonnet, bow, and quiver, for Douglas;" but Mrs. Barry's was left in Crow Street. It consisted of a black velvet dress and train; nine silk and satin dresses, of various hues, all trained; numerous other dresses, of inferior material; and "a pair of shepherd's breeches," which Boaden thinks were designed "for the dear woman's own Rosalind, no doubt." Like Betterton, Barry suffered excruciatingly from attacks of gout; but, like Betterton, and John Kemble in this respect resembled them both, he performed in defiance of physical pain: mind triumphing over matter. On the 8th of October, 1776, he played Jaffier to the Pierre of Aikin, and the Belvidera of his wife. He was then only fifty-seven years of age; but there was a wreck of all his qualities,—save indomitable will. Barry, on the stage, was almost as effective as he had ever been; but, off the charmed ground, he succumbed to infirmity and lay insensible, or struggling, or waiting mournfully for renewal of strength, between the acts. He continued ill for many weeks, during which his chief characters passed into the hands of Lewis, the great grandson of Harley's secretary, but himself the son of a London linendraper. Lewis, who had now been three years on the London stage, played Hamlet, and Norval, Chamont, Mirabel, Young Bevil, and Lord Townly; but on the 28th of November, Barry roused himself, as if unwilling

that the young actor, who had excelled Mossop in Dublin, should overcome, in London, the player who had competed, not always vainly, with Garrick. On that night, as I have already recorded, he played Evander to his wife's Euphrasia, in the "Grecian Daughter;" but he never played or spoke on the stage again. On January 10th, 1777, he died, to the great regret of a world of friends and admirers, and to the awakening of much poetry of generally execrable quality. One poet called him, Thalia's graceful son; but he could be as pathetic as he was graceful! This was especially the case when, in his younger days, he played with Mrs. Cibber,—Castalio to her Monimia,—at which a *comic* actor, once looked on, burst into tears, and was foolish enough to be ashamed of it! No two played lover and mistress, wife and husband, as they did. Mrs. Cibber, said the critics, who forgot her Beatrice to Garrick's Benedick, could, with equal, though different effect, be only the daughter or sister to Garrick, Cordelia to Garrick's Lear, but a Juliet to Barry's Romeo, a Belvidera to his Jaffier. When Mrs. Bellamy acted with him, the effect was as complete. Colley Cibber was in the house on the night of his first appearance as Othello; he applauded loudly; and is said to have preferred Barry, in *this* character, to either Betterton or Booth. In Orestes, Barry was so incomparable, that Garrick never attempted the part in London. His Alexander lost all its bombast, in his hands; while, says Davies, "he charmed the ladies by the soft melody of his love complaints, and the noble ardour of his courtship." The grace of his exit and entrance was all his own; though he took lessons in dancing, from Desnoyers, to please the Prince of Wales.

Barry was a well-informed man, had great conversational powers, and told an Irish story with an effect which was only equalled by that with which he acted Sir Callaghan O'Brallaghan. In that accomplishment and this character, Garrick owned that Barry was not to be approached; but, said the former, "I can beat Barry's head off in telling all stories, but Irish ones." It was in pathos on the stage, not in humour off of it, that Barry excelled. "All exquisitely tender or touching writing," says an anonymous contemporary, "came mended from his mouth. There was a pathos, a sweetness, a delicacy, in his utterance, which stole upon the mind, and forced conviction on the memory. Every sentiment of honour and virtue, recommended to the ear by the language of the author, were rivetted to the heart by the utterance of Barry." Excessive sensibility conquered his powers.

His heart overcame his head; but Garrick never forgot himself in his character, Barry felt all he uttered, before he made his audience feel; but Garrick made his audience feel, and was not overcome by his own emotions. Churchill describes the lofty and admired Barry as possessing a voice too sweet and soft for rage, and as going wrong through too much pains to err. The malignant bard alludes to the "well-applauded tenderness" of his Lear; to the march of his speeches, line by line; to his preventing surprise by preparatory efforts; and to his artificial style, manifest alike in his passions as in his utterance. This dark portrait was limned with the idea that it would please Garrick, whom it could *not* please. The two actors respected each other. "You have already," writes Barry, in 1746, to Garrick, "made me happy by your friendship. It shall be the business and pleasure of my life to endeavour to deserve it; and I would willingly make it the basis of my future fortune." This feeling never waned. Above a score of years later, Barry writes: "I hear you are displeased with me, which I beg leave to assure you, I shall feel much more than all the distresses and disappointments that have happened to me." Lord Chesterfield had said of Barry, "He is so handsome, he will not be long on the stage; some rich widow will carry him off." At a later date, Barry was in London, with the widow, but not a rich widow, he had brought from Dublin, Mrs. Dancer. The lady was admirably trained by him; and when Garrick saw Mrs. Barry play the Irish Widow, in his own farce, after superbly enacting a tragic part, he could not help exclaiming, sincerely as he admired Mrs. Cibber, Pritchard, and Yates,—"She is the heroine of heroines!" In his later days, when infirmity pressed Barry painfully, he occasionally lost his temper, for a moment. Once this occurred when Miss Pope's benefit interfered with that of Mrs. Barry, and he wrote an angry letter to Garrick, the ill-temper in which is indicated by Garrick's endorsement: "— from Barry; he calls Miss Pope '*trumpery!*'" Lacy told Davies that the Barrys' salary was £1,500 a year (but the cost of their dresses fell heavily on them). "Mr. Barry is only paid when he plays," said Garrick to Miss Pope; and this explains Barry's own remark: "I have lost £48 by the death of the Princess Louisa." In costume and in stage diet, Barry was the reverse of Mossop. Near ninety years ago, the former played Othello in a gold-laced scarlet suit, small cocked hat, and knee-breeches, with silk stockings, which then displayed his gouty legs. His wife, as Desdemona, wore, more

correctly, a fascinating Italian costume, and looked as captivating as the decaying actor looked grotesque. Barry did not vary his diet according to the part he had to play. It was his invariable custom, after acting, to sup on boiled fowl. His house, first in Broad Street, then in Norfolk, and lastly in Cecil Street, was visited by the good among the great. Such was Henry Pelham, an inelegant, but frank speaker in Parliament, who had a great admiration for Barry's graceful elocution. Player and minister had long been friends, but it was the player, the Mark Antony of the stage, whose vain glory made wreck of their friendship. Pelham invited himself to sup with Barry, and the actor treated his guest as one prince might another. He invariably did the honours of his table with great elegance; but on this occasion there was a magnificent ostentation which offended Pelham. "I could not have given a more splendid supper myself," he remarked; and he would never consent to be Barry's guest again.

Of the nineteen characters, of which Barry was the original actor, there stand out, more celebrated than the rest, Mahomet, in Johnson's "Irene;" Young Norval, in London (in the white puckered satin suit); and Evander, in the "Grecian Daughter." The last was a master-piece of impersonation, and Barry drew tears as copiously in this part as ever his great rival did in King Lear, in which, by the way, Garrick's too frequent use of his white pocket-handkerchief was looked upon by the critics as bathos, with respect to the act; and an anachronism, with regard to the article!

"Were interred, in a private manner, in the cloysters, Westminster, the remains of Spranger Barry, late of Covent Garden Theatre." Such is the simple farewell, a week after his death, of the public papers, to young Douglas, old Evander, the silver-toned actor. Macklin was one of the funeral procession from Cecil Street to the cloisters. Looking into the grave, he murmured, "Poor Spranger!" and when some one would fain have led the old man away, he said mournfully, "Sir, I am at my rehearsal. Do not disturb my reverie!" Mrs. Barry survived her great husband, nearly a quarter of a century. Although that great husband did not found a school of acting, he had his imitators. A Barry school required a manly beauty, and an exquisitely-toned voice, such as fall to the lot of few actors. Nevertheless, in 1788, a successor was announced in the person of an Irish player, Middleton, whose real name was Magann. He had abandoned the medical profession for the stage, some obstacles to his reaching

which had actually rendered him partially and temporarily insane. He had fine powers of elocution, and in Romeo and Othello reminded the old friends of Barry—perhaps, painfully,—of their lost favourite. The imitation was stronger off the stage than on; for, with 30*s.* a week, Middleton strove to live in Barry's sumptuous style. Thereby, he soon ceased to live at all, ending a brief career in misery, and leaving his body to be buried by the charity of his fellow-players. Mrs. Barry was sufficiently recovered from the grief of losing her husband, to be able to play Viola, for her benefit, two months after his decease. When she resumed her great part of Lady Randolph, she spoke a few affected lines, written by Garrick, in memory of the first and the most elegant and perfect of young Norvals. I will not divide the sketch of the story of Mrs. Spranger Barry from that of the most worthy of her three husbands. Her father was a well-to-do, but extravagant apothecary in Bath, whose daughter, Miss Street, was celebrated for her graceful figure, expressive beauty, and rich auburn hair. The handsome and clever girl was jilted by a lover, whose affection for the apothecary's daughter cooled, on a sudden accession of fortune occurring to himself. Poor Ariadne went for solace to the North, where. after some while, she found a Bacchus in a hot-headed, jealous, but seductive actor, named Dancer, who married her, and placed her, nothing loath, upon the stage. Her friends were scandalized, and her widowed mother bequeathed her a trifling annuity, only on condition of her ceasing to be an actress. Mrs. Dancer declined; and the honest man to whom the annuity was thereby forfeited, surrendered the whole to her, and bade her prosper! Prosperity, however, only came after long study and severe labour, and many trials and vexations. When Barry assumed the management of the Dublin Theatre, he found Mrs. Dancer a promising actress, and her lord the most jealous husband in Ireland. Youth, Beauty, genius, were the endowments she had brought to that husband; and he, on his death, left her in full possession of all she had brought with her, and nothing more. But these and a liberal salary were charms that attracted many admirers. An Irish Earl was not ashamed, indeed, to woo the young, fair, and accomplished creature, with too free a gallantry; but all the earls in the peerage had no chance against the manly beauty and the silver tone of Spranger Barry. Hand-in-hand with her new husband, she came to London. Garrick sat in the pit, at Foote's theatre, to witness her *début*. He approved; and forthwith she took a place at the head of her profession, equal

almost with her great namesake of the previous century, scarcely inferior to Mrs Pritchard or Mrs. Cibber, superior to Mrs. Yates, and not to be excelled till, in the evening of her days, Sarah Siddons came, to wish her gone, and to speed the going. Mrs. Barry had a modest gaiety in her manners and address; and though in Belvidera, Lady Randolph, Rutland, Euphrasia, Monimia, and Desdemona, she defied rivalry, she really preferred to act Lady Townly, Beatrice, the Widow Brady, Rosalind, and Biddy Tipkin. She acted tragedy, to gratify the house; comedy, to please herself; and she had a supreme indifference for the patronage of Ladies of Quality if she could only win the plaudits of the public at large. In the "Jubilee," however, she represented the *Tragic* muse.

Two years after Barry's death, his widow married a scampish young Irish barrister, named Crawford, who spent her money, broke her heart, and was the cause of her theatrical wardrobe being seized by a Welsh landlord, for debt. Crawford only regarded her as a means whereby he might live. There is something supremely melancholy in the story of Mrs. Barry, after this time. She raised her young husband to such efficiency that in London, he played Jaffier, and also, occasionally, Pierre, to her Belvidera; and the bad fellow might have respected a woman who did this, and could also earn £1,100 in sixteen nights of acting, in Ireland. In the latter country, whither Mrs. Crawford went, after playing Zara, in 1781, thereby leaving a long-desired opening to Mrs. Siddons, Mr. Crawford acquired a reputation for shabbiness. On his benefit night, in a supper scene, he provided no refreshments on the table, for the actors seated round it, and this omission produced a scene of unrehearsed effects, of exposure of Crawford's meanness, on the part of the players, and indignation against him on the part of the audience. When he became lessee, after Ryder, his own unhappy wife could not trust him, and often refused to go on, till Crawford had collected the amount of her salary from the doorkeepers,—if they had taken as much. He was reduced to such straits that one night, on the desertion of his unpaid band, he himself, and alone, played the violin in the orchestra, dressed as he was for Othello, which he acted on the stage. The Irish audience enjoyed the fun, and even Mrs. Crawford was so attached to him, that when Jephson's "Count of Narbonne" was first produced, in which, from her age, she should have played the Countess, she chose to act Adelaide, that her husband might still make love to her, as Theodore! All that she earned, Crawford

squandered. Fortunately, the small annuity left by her mother was secured to her, and this Crawford could not touch. Her health and spirits failed, and her acting grew comparatively languid. The appearance of Mrs. Siddons, in the best of her years, strength, beauty, and ability, quickened the jealous pulses of the older actress's heart, and she once more played Lady Randolph, with such effect, that the *Morning Chronicle* asserted, no competitor could achieve a like triumph. The younger actress at last outshone Mrs. Crawford, whose very benefits became unprofitable. Her last appearance on the stage was at Covent Garden, on the 16th of April, 1798, in Lady Randolph. She died in 1801, having reaped honour enough to enable her to be free from envy of others, and having means sufficient to render her closing days void of anxiety. The Grecian Daughter, the Widow Brady, and Edwina, in Hannah More's "Percy," were the best of her original characters; of her other parts, Lady Randolph is the most intimately connected with her name. As between her and Mrs. Siddons, the judgment seems well-founded which declares that Mrs. Crawford was inferior to Mrs. Siddons in the terrific, but superior in the pathetic. At Mrs. Crawford's "Is he alive?" in Lady Randolph, Bannister had seen half the pit start to their feet. Mrs. Siddons was but a "demi-goddess," as Walpole has it, in comedy, where Mrs. Barry was often inimitable. Walpole saw both actresses in "Percy," and he most admired Mrs. Siddons's passionate scenes. Mrs. Crawford, to take leave of her in her last name, was no admirer of the great actress by whom she was displaced; and the old lady did not ill-distinguish between the school to which she belonged and that founded by her comparatively young rival. "The Garrick school," she said, "was all *rapidity* and *passion;* while the Kemble school is so full of *paw* and *pause* that, at first, the performers, thinking their new competitors had either lost their cues, or forgotten their parts, used frequently to prompt them."

As we associate the name of Barry with that of Garrick, so do we that of Mossop with Spranger Barry. Mossop, whose career on the stage commenced in 1749, with Zanga,—type of characters in which alone he excelled,—died in 1773, at the age of forty-five. He was the ill-fated son of an Irish clergyman, and he was always on the point of becoming a great actor, but never accomplishing that end. His syllables fell from him like minute-guns, even in or-din-a-ry con-ver-sa-tion, and the nickname of the "tea-pot actor," referred to his favourite attitude with one arm on his hip

and the other extended. In London, an evanescent success in Richard and similar characters, almost made of him a rival of Garrick. In Dublin, he ruined Barry by his opposing management, which also brought down ruin on himself. Of this "monster of perfection," or the "pragmatical puppy," as he was variously called, we learn something from the *Dublin Journal* of May 8th, 1772, which says, "A few days ago, the celebrated tragedian, Mossop, moved to his new apartments in the Rules of the Fleet." When Mossop returned to London, his powers had failed. He could not obtain "first business," declined to accept "second," and proudly died in poverty, at Chelsea, leaving for all fortune, one poor penny. Garrick offered to bury him, but a kinsman who would have nothing to say to the actor, claimed the satisfaction of consigning him to the grave, whither, after all, his brother actors carried him. So ended the promising player who combined gastronomy with his study of the drama, and ordered his dinner, according to the part he had to act; sausages and Zanga; rump-steaks and Richard; pork-chops and Pierre; veal-cutlets and Barbarossa; and so forth! The antagonism of the two Irish actors seems to have wearied the Dublin people, who, at last,

> ———"did not care a toss-up,
> If Mossop beat Barry, or Barry beat Mossop."

Of some other actors who left the stage about the same period, I will speak in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

KITTY CLIVE, WOODWARD, SHUTER.

As Mr. Wilks passes along, to or from rehearsal, there are two young girls of about sixteen years of age, who gaze at him admiringly. Day after day, the graceful actor remarks this more graceful couple, the name of the brighter of whom is Raftor. She is of Irish parentage, and of good family. Her father, a native of Kilkenny, had served King James, and got ruin for his wages. Catherine Raftor was born, in 1711, into a poor household, and received as poor an education as many countesses, her contemporaries; and here we come upon her, some sixteen years afterwards, watching *Sir Harry Wildair* entering or issuing from that gate of Elysium, the stage-door of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. If she but knew the "Sesame!" that would give admission to *her*, she would be as happy as a houri! She had the potent magic in her voice, which won access for her to the elder Cibber, who awarded the young thing fifteen shillings a week, and then entrusted to her the little part of Ismenes, in "Mithridates." In such solemn guise commenced the career of the very queen of hoydens and chambermaids! As for her companion, a Miss Johnson, she was appropriated to himself by Theophilus Cibber, who made of her his first wife; but she failed to attain the celebrity of Miss Raftor, who charmed audiences by the magic of her voice, and authors by the earnestness with which she strove to realise their ideas. In 1732, Miss Raftor married Mr. Clive, the brother of Mr. Baron Clive. In the following year Fielding thus writes a paragraph of her biography, in his dedication to her of the "Intriguing Chambermaid," in which she played Lettice: "As great a favourite as you are at present with the audience, you would be much more so were they acquainted with your private character, could they see you laying out great part of the

profits which arise to you from entertaining them so well, in the support of an aged father; did they see you who can charm them on the stage with personating the foolish and vicious characters of your sex; acting in real life the part of the best wife, the best daughter, the best sister, and the best friend." "Kitty Clive," however, and her not very courteous husband, could not keep household together. They separated. The lady was vivacious, and stood on her rights, whether at home or on the stage, against her husband, or against Mrs. Cibber, or Shuter, or Garrick himself, who was in more awe of her than she of him. She alone dared take a liberty with David, and, by a witty word well applied, to so incline him to irrepressible laughter, as to render speaking impossible. But it was all done out of good nature, in which Mrs. Clive was steeped to the lips, and of which she was lavish even to young actresses who came, in her later days, to dispute the succession to her parts. To the most formidable and triumphant of these, good Miss Pope, she gave excellent counsel, warning, and encouragement, for which "Pope" never ceased to be grateful.

Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Clive, as Polly and Lucy, in the "Beggars' Opera," must have exhibited a matchless combination of singing and acting. Mrs. Clive was as ambitious as Mrs. Cibber, and would fain have played, like her, leading parts with Garrick. Her most successful attempt in this way was her Bizarre to his Duretete, in the "Inconstant." She was often at feud with Garrick, but justice was not forgotten in wrath. One night she watched his Lear, from the wing, for the purpose of noting its defects, but she was so overwhelmed by it, that she rushed into the green-room, exclaiming, "Curse him! I believe he could act on a gridiron!" One effect of her careful, earnest, but perfectly natural and apparently spontaneous acting was to put every other player on his mettle. That done, Mrs. Clive took care the victory should not be lost to her for want of pains to gaily secure it. She was a capital mimic, particularly of the Italian signoras, whom she did not call by nice names. For a town languishing for the return of Cuzzoni, she had the most unqualified contempt. She herself was inimitable; she wrung from Johnson the rarest and most unqualified praise; and over her audiences she ruled supremely; they felt with her, smiled with her, sneered with her, giggled, tossed their heads, and laughed aloud with her. She was the one true Comic Genius, and none could withstand her. She had that power of identification which belongs only to the great

intellectual players. She was a born, buxom, roguish chambermaid, fierce virago, chuckling hoyden, brazen romp, stolid country girl, affected fine lady, and thoroughly natural old woman, of whatever condition in life. From Phillida, in "Love in a Riddle," her first original character, to Mrs. Wimifred, in the "School for Rakes," her last, with forty years of toil and pleasure between them, she identified herself with all. *But*, in parts like Portia and Zara, which Mrs. Clive essayed, she fell below their requirements, though I do not know how the most beautifully expressive voice in the world could have been "awkwardly dissonant" in the latter part. Her Portia was too flippant, and in the trial scene it was her custom to mimic the most celebrated lawyer of the day, and raise uncontrollable laughter from it. This custom did not die out till Matthews in Flexible ("Love Law and Physic" mimicked Lord Ellenborough, and received an order from the Lord Chamberlain's office to desist.

After forty years' service, Mrs. Clive took leave of the stage, April 24, 1769, in Flora, in the "Wonder," and the Fine Lady, in "Lethe," and she spoke an epilogue, weak and in bad taste, written by her friend Walpole, who affected to despise the writers of such addresses, and, in this case, did not equal those whom he despised. Mrs. Clive has the reputation of being the authoress of two or three insignificant farces, produced at her benefits, to exhibit some peculiar talent of her own. They had no other merit. Isaac Reed says: "Notwithstanding the temptations to which a theatre is sometimes apt to expose young persons of the female sex, and the too great readiness of the public to give way to unkind suppositions in regard to them, calumny itself has never seemed to aim the slightest arrow at her fame." She was quick of temper, especially if David attempted to fine her for absence from rehearsals; and no wonder, since for one hundred and eighty nights' performance this charming actress received but £300! but, as she said, "I have always had good health, and have ever been above subterfuge." When about to retire, she wrote to Garrick, with some obliviousness as to dates:—"What signifies 52? They had rather see *the* Garrick and *the* Clive at 104 than any of the moderns. Garrick said, "I am grieved to lose you." To which she saucily replied: "Not you, Davy, you'd light up for joy, only the candles would cost you sixpence!" In her retirement, Mrs. Clive passed many happy years, in the house which Walpole gave up as a home for herself and brother, next to his own at Strawberry, and which he playfully called "Clive-den." A green

lane, which he cut for her use between the house and the common, he proposed to call *Drury Lane*. Here, at Cliveden, the ex-actress gave exquisite little suppers after pleasant little card parties, at which, in Walpole's phrase, she made miraculous draughts of fishes. Men and women of "quality" and good character, married and unmarried,—actors, authors, artists, and clergymen,—met here; where the brother of the hostess, a poor ex-actor, ill-favoured and awkward, told capital stories, and found the company in laughter and Walpole in flattery.

Of an evening, in summer-time, trim Horace and portly Clive might be seen walking in the meadows together; or Walpole and a brilliant company, gossiping, laughing, flirting, philandering, might be noted on their way across the grass to Strawberry, after a gay time of it at "*Little* Strawberry Hill." The place was at its pleasantest, when Walpole, Mrs. Clive and her brother, sat together in the garden, and conversed playfully of old dramatic glories. *She* was so joyous, that Lady Townshend said,—her face rose on Strawberry and made it sultry. When Hounslow powder mills blew up, Walpole described the terrific power of the explosion; by remarking, that it "almost shook Mrs. Clive!" One of her dear delights was to play quadrille with George Montagu, from dinner to supper; and then to sing Purcell, from supper to breakfast time. Her only trials were when the tax gatherer ran off, and she was compelled to pay her rates twice; or when the parish refused to mend her ways, as she said; or her house was broken into by burglars; or when she was robbed in her own lane by footpads. "Have you not heard," she wrote to Garrick, in June, 1776, "of your poor Pivy? I have been rob'd and murder'd, coming from Kingston. Jimey" (her brother) "and I in a post chey, at half-past nine, just by Teddington church was stopt. I only lost a little silver and my senses; for one of them came into the carriage with a great horse pistol, to search for my watch, but I had it not with me." In 1784 she came up to London to see Mrs. Siddons act. Mrs. Clive listened to her with profound attention; and on being asked, at the conclusion of the performance, what she thought of it: "Think!" said the vivacious old lady, in her ready way; "I think it's all truth and daylight!"

In the December of the following year, the long career of this erst comic muse came to a close. Walpole tells it briefly. "I had played at cards with her, at Mrs. Gostlings, three nights before I came to town, and found her extremely confused, and not knowing what she did; indeed I had seen something of this

sort before, and had found her much broken this autumn. It seems, that the day after I saw her, she went to General Lister's burial, and had got cold, and had been ill for two or three days. On the Wednesday morning, she rose to have her bed made; and while sitting on the bed, with her maid by her, sank down at once, and died without a pang or a groan." So departed the actress, of whom Johnson said, that she had more true humour than any other he had ever seen. She originated nearly fourscore characters; among others, Nell, in the "Devil to Pay;" half a dozen Kittys; but chief of all, the Kitty of "High Life Below Stairs;" and Mrs. Heidelberg, in the "Clandestine Marriage."

To think of her friend, Harry Woodward, is to think of Captain Bobadil,—in which he never had equal. To remember Harry Woodward, is to remember the original French Cook, in Dodsley's "Sir John Cockle," wherein Woodward turned to good account the French he had learned at Merchant Tailors' school. His Jack Meggot, in the "Suspicious Husband," his Dick, in the "Apprentice," his Lofty, in the "Good Natured Man," and his Captain Absolute, in the "Rivals,"—were all original and brilliant creations, in acting which, the best of his many successors lacked something possessed by *him*, whose Slender and Petruchio are described as being perfect pictures of simplicity and manliness. Look at him, in his boyhood;—he is a tallow chandler's son, *rien que ça!* living close by the Anchor Brewery, in Southwark, now owned by Barclay and Perkins. Woodward played beneath the Anchor gateway, and thence went as a pupil to Merchant Tailors'.

I think if he had never gone thither, he never would have added lustre to the British stage. He was born about the last year of Queen Anne's reign, and was in Lawrence Pountney when he was some ten years old. The quick lad became a good classical scholar, and in after years, he used to astonish and gratify the society which he most loved, by the aptness of his quotations; not for effect, for Harry Woodward, look you, was as modest as he was clever. I cannot find exactly the date when Woodward commenced as a professional actor; but he was not more than a mere youth. There was a boy of his name, at Goodman's Fields, who played pantomime parts before Harry Woodward appeared there in 1730, commencing then a career with Simple, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," which ended at Covent Garden, on the 13th of January, 1777, with Stephano, in the "Tempest." On the 10th of April, the then new comedy, "Know your own Mind," was acted, for his benefit, and on that day week,

the lad who used to play under the gateway of the Anchor brewery, to trudge, in all weathers over Old London Bridge, to Merchant Tailors' School, and who preferred the life of a player to that of a candle-maker, died; and with him Captain Bobadil died too. Woodward was one of the most careful dressers on the stage; not as regards chronology, but perfection of suit. Woodward played Mercutio in the full dress of a very fine gentleman of Woodward's day. Then, he was one of the few lucky actors who never seem to grow old. After nigh upon half-a-century of labour, his Fitzpatrick, in "News from Parnassus," was as young in look and buoyant in manner as the Spruce of his earlier days. He was also among one of the few judicious and generous actors, when in the highest favour with the town; at which season, he did not disdain, when it was needful, to go on as a soldier, to deliver a message; but then he delivered it like a soldier, and the frequenters of the joyous rooms under and over the "Piazza," made approving reference to that "clever little bit of Woodward's, last night." He always found a defender in Garrick. Foote called Woodward a "contemptible fellow," when he heard that the latter was about to dress Malingene so as to look like Foote. "He cannot be contemptible," said Garrick, "since you are afraid of him in the very line in which you, yourself, excel." Woodward was naturally kind-hearted. Once, being warned not to relieve a beggar, he said, "that man is either very wretched, or he is a great actor; in either case I see a man and a brother." Of course, being naturally a comic actor, Woodward had an affection for tragedy; but it was not in him to utter a serious line with due effect. His scamps were perfect in their cool impudence; his modern fops shone with a brazen impertinence; his fops of an older time glistened with an elegant rascality; his mock heroes were stupendously but suspiciously outrageous; his every-day simpletons, vulgarly stolid; and his Shakspearean light characters brim-full and running over with Shakspearean spirit. Graceful of form, his aspect was something serious off the stage, but he no sooner passed the wing than a ripple of funny emotion seemed to roll over his face, and this, combined with a fine stage-voice, never failed to place him and his audience in the happiest sympathetic connection. Bobadil was his great part, but in Marplot also, he was everything author or audience could wish, and in Touchstone, he had no equal till Lewis came.

With Woodward, passed Shuter, who was an actor entirely of the Garrick period, commencing his vocation as Catesby, at

Richmond, in 1744, and concluding as Falstaff, to the Prince, (in "Henry V.") of Lewis, played for his own benefit, at Covent Garden, in May, 1776. It was strange that a low comedian should make his *début* in so level a part as Catesby. He was then, however, a mere boy. In June, 1746, when he acted Osrick and third Witch in "Macbeth," Garrick playing Hamlet and the Thane, he was designated "Master Shuter." Thence, to the night on which he went home to die, after playing Falstaff, his life was one of intense professional labour, with much jollification, thoughtlessness, embarrassment, gay philosophy, hard drinking, and addiction to religion, as it was expounded by Whitfield. Among the characters which he originated are Papillon in the "Liar," Justice Woodcock, Druggett, Abrahamides, Croaker, Old Hardcastle, and Sir Anthony Absolute. His most daring effort was in once attempting *Shylock!* There are few comic actors who have had such command over the muscles of the face as Shuter. He could do what he liked with them, and vary the laughter as he worked the muscles. Not that he depended on grimace; this was only the ally of his humour, and both were impulsive—as the man was, by nature; he often stirred the house with mirth, by saying something better than the author had put down for him. Off, as on the stage, it was Shuter's characteristic that he pleased everybody, and ruined himself. I never pass his old lodgings in Denzil Street, or at No. 2, Martlett Court, without thinking kindly of this player. Some laughed at him for taking to serious ways, without abandoning his old gay paths of delight; but the former was of his sincerity, the latter of his weakness. He chose to follow Calvinistic Whitfield rather than Arminian Wesley; but poor Ned felt that if salvation depended on works, "Pilgarlick," as Whitfield called him, was lost; whereas, faith rescued him, and Shuter could believe. Works he added to his faith, though he made no account of them. Of all the frequenters of Whitfield's Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, there was no more liberal giver than the shattered, trembling, laughing, hoping, fearing, despairing, in short, much perplexed actor and man, who oscillated between Covent Garden stage and the Tabernacle pulpit, and meditated over his pipe and bottle in Drury Lane, upon the infinite varieties of life. And therewith, *exit*, Shuter; and *enter*, Mr. Foote!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SAMUEL FOOTE.

"One Foote, a player," is Walpole's contemptuous reference to the "British Aristophanes." But the player was as good a man by birth, and as witty a man by nature, as he who despised him. His father was a Cornish gentleman, and an M.P.; his mother a daughter of Sir Edmund Goodere, Bart., through whom Foote called cousins with the ducal family of Rutland. Young Sam Foote, born at Truro, in 1720, became a pupil at the Worcester Grammar School. His kinsfolk on the maternal side used to invite him to dinner on the Sundays, and the observant, but not too grateful guest, kept the Monday school hilarious and idle, by imitations of his hospitable relatives. The applause he received, helped to make Foote, ultimately, both famous and infamous. Later in life he entered Worcester College, Oxford, and quitted both with the honours likely to be reaped by so clever a student. Having made fun of the authorities, made a fool of the provost, and made the city turn up the eye of astonishment at his audacity in dress, and way of living, he "retired," an undergraduate, to his father's house. There, by successfully mimicking a couple of justices who were his father's guests, he was considered likely to have an especial call to the Bar! He entered at the Temple, and while resident there, a catastrophe occurred in his family. His mother had two brothers; Sir John Goodere, and Captain Samuel Goodere. The baronet was a bachelor, and the captain in the royal navy, being anxious to enjoy the estate, strangled his elder brother on board his own ship, the *Ruby*. The assassin was executed. Shortly after, Cooke introduced his finely-dressed friend, Foote, at a club in Covent Garden, as "Mr. Foote, the nephew of the gentleman who was lately hung in chains for murdering his brother!"

Foote succeeded as ill at the Temple as at Oxford; and his necessities, we are told, drove him on the stage. When those necessities were relieved, he preferred buying a diamond ring, or new lace for his coat, to purchasing a pair of stockings. He did not live to make, but to break, fortunes. Of these he "got through" three, and realised the motto on his carriage, "*Iterum, iterum, iterumque.*" His connection with those great amateur actors, the Delavals, was of use to him, for it afforded him practice, and readier access to the stage, where, as a regular player, he first appeared at the Haymarket, on the 6th of February, 1744, as Othello, "dressed after the manner of the country." He failed; yet "he perfectly knew what the author meant," says Macklin. Others, again, describe his Moor as a master-piece of burlesque, only inferior in its extravagance and nonsense to his Hamlet, which I do not think he ever attempted. His Pierre and Shylock were failures, and even his Lord Foppington, played in his first season, indicated that Cibber was not to depart with the hope that he was likely to have in Foote an able successor. According to Davies, Foote was despicable in all parts, but those he wrote for himself; and Colman says he was jealous of every other actor, and cared little how any dramas but his own were represented. Wilkinson ascribes to him a peculiar excellence. In Dublin, 1744-5, he was well received, and drew a few good houses; and thence came to Drury Lane. He played the fine gentlemen, but he could not reach the height of Cibber, Booth, or Wilks. He had the defects of all three, and nothing superior to either, but in the expression of the eye and lip. His thick-set figure, and his vulgar cast of features, he had not yet turned to purpose. He was conscious of a latent strength, but knew not where it lay. He had failed in tragedy, and was pronounced unfit for comedy; and he asked, almost despairingly, "What the deuce, then, *am* I fit for?" As we find him the next three years, 1747, 8, 9, at the Haymarket, giving his "Diversions of the Morning," his "Tea," his "Chocolate," and his "Auction of Pictures;" it is clear that he soon discovered where his fitness lay. At the outset, he combined the regular drama with his "Entertainment," Shuter, Lee, and Mrs. Hallam, being with him. The old wooden house being unlicensed, Foote got into difficulties, but he surmounted them by perseverance. He drew the town, morning after morning, and then night after night, with imitations of the actors at other houses, of public characters, and even of members of private clubs. Some of the actors retaliated, Woodward particularly. Their

only strong point was that Foote, in striving to enrich himself, was injuring the regular drama. His Cat Concerts did really constitute fair satire against the Italians. But people paid, laughed, and defied law and the constables: and Foote continued to show up Dr. Barrowby, the critic; Chevalier Taylor, the quack oculist; Cocks, the auctioneer; Orator Henley; Sir Thomas De Veal, the Justice of the Peace; and other noted persons of the day.

For a few years Foote was engaged alternately at either house, on a sort of starring engagement, during which he produced his "Englishman in Paris" (Buck, by Macklin; Lucinda, by his clever daughter); "Englishman Returned from Paris" (Buck, by Foote); "Taste" (Lady Pentweazle, by Worsdale); and the "Author" (Cadwallader, by Foote). In the first two satires, was scourged the alleged folly of sending a young fellow to travel, by way of education; but in this instance the satire fails, for Buck, who leaves home a decided brute, returns in an improved form as only a coxcomb. The satire in the "Englishman in Paris," was thought too severe by one of the audience, in 1753. An officer present denied it; words ensued; a duel followed, and the officer was carried home, with a bad wound in his thigh. "Taste" satirised the enthusiasm for objects of *virtû*, the humbug of portrait painters, and the vanity of those who sat to them. Worsdale was himself an artist, and a scamp. He kept, half-starved, and kicked Leatitia Pilkington, the very head of all the house of hussies, obnoxious to such treatment. In the "Author" Foote caricatured one of his own friends, Mr. Ap Rice (or Apreece), who sat opened-mouthed and silly, in the boxes, mystified by the reflection of himself, which he beheld on the stage. In 1760, Foote brought out his "Minor" in Dublin, he playing Shift, and Woodward, Mrs. Cole. In the summer of the same year he re-produced it at the Haymarket, playing Shift, Smirk, and Mrs. Cole. After occasionally acting at the two larger theatres, and creating Young Wilding, in the "Liar," he finally went to the Haymarket, where, from 1762 to 1776, he acted almost exclusively. In the "Minor," the author pilloried Longford, the plausible auctioneer, Mother Douglas, a woman of evil life, and the Rev. George Whitfield, who was endeavouring to amend life wherever he found it of an evil quality. Foote did not care for the suppression of vice; but if he who attempted to suppress it had a foible, or a strongly-marked characteristic, Foote laid hold of him, and made him look like a fool or a rascal, in the eyes of a too willing audience. The "Minor" failed in

Dublin, to the credit of an Irish audience, if they condemned it on the ground of its immorality. To the credit of English society, strong protest was made against it here; and also in Scotland, but the theatres were full whenever it was represented, nevertheless! The injury it effected must have been incalculable, for the wit was on a par with the blasphemy. Saving Grace and the work of the Holy Ghost were employed to raise a laugh! Foote, nevertheless, protested that he meant no offence against the pious, but only against hypocrites. He was driven to that excuse. It is one that cannot be accepted, for Foote was not a truthful man. When he was taxed with ridiculing the Duchess of Kingston as Kitty Crocodile, in the "Trip to Calais," he assured Lord Hertford, the Chamberlain, that he had no idea that the allusions in that piece could apply to the duchess! and when he failed in procuring a license to play it, he had the impudence to lay the grounds of failure to his having refused to put Lord Hertford's son on the box-keeper's free list! Lady Llanover asserts that when Foote completed his caricature of the duchess, "he informed her of it, in the hopes of extorting a large bribe for its suppression; and Walpole has recorded, that the duchess offered him a bribe "just as if he had been a member of parliament!"

Foote's fourteen years' of summer seasons at the Haymarket, formed an era of their own. In his first year, 1762, he produced the "Orators." In the satire on public speakers, Foote caricatured Faulkner, the Irish publisher, whose infirmity, (he had but one leg) should have saved him from what otherwise may have been due to his conceit. In the "Mayor of Garratt," the more general caricature of a class, (the Sneaks and the Bruins) has been more lastingly popular; the individual, however, is included in Matthew Mug, aimed at the Duke of Newcastle. In the "Patron," the general satire was levelled at antiquaries. The individual pilloried in this piece was Lord Melcombe, under the form of Sir Thomas Lofty, played by Foote; who also laughed at the English Nabob of that day, in Sir Peter Pepperpot, acted by him, in the same piece.

In 1765, Walpole thus wrote of Foote and others, to Brand:— "You will think it odd that I should want to laugh, when Wilks, Sterne, and Foote are here; but the first does not make me laugh; the second never could; and, for the third, I choose to pay five shillings, when I have a mind he should divert me."

In the "Commissary," Foote, as Zachary Fungus, aimed his

shafts at the gentility of the vulgar; hitting Dr. Arne, personally, in the character of Dr. Catgut. In 1766, Foote met with the accident which reduced him to the condition of one-legged George Faulkner, and he did not play; but in 1767 he opened the Haymarket Theatre, after re-constructing the interior. He had the Barrys for a few nights, and brought out that burlesque-tragedy, the "Tailors," which was said to have been left anonymously at Dodsley's shop, and which kept its vitality down to the days of John Reeve. The fault of this piece is not in having tailors instead of persons of consequence in a burlesque, but, that the tailors talk seriously, and like people of consequence, well brought up. His great success in 1768, was with his "Devil on Two Sticks," by which he cleared between three and four thousand pounds, a golden harvest, of which scarcely a grain was left at the close of the year. The satire here is generally laid against medical quackery, in the person of Dr. Last, by Weston; but Foote, as the Devil, in disguise, took upon him the burthen of individual caricature. As Dr. Squib, he rendered ridiculous Dr. Brocklesby; and as the President of a College of Physicians, he exposed to derision Sir William Browne. Sir William's wig, coat, contracted eye firmly holding an eye-glass, and his remarkably upright figure, were all there; but the caricaturist had forgotten Sir William's special characteristic, his muff, which the good-tempered doctor sent to Foote, to make the figure complete! In 1769, Foote produced nothing new of his own; but the general business was good, and Sheridan drew good houses in tragedy, though Foote described him as "dwindled down into a mere *Cock and Bottle* Chelsea Pensioner." In 1770, Foote, in his "Lame Lover," made a miss in aiming at "those maggots of the law, who breed in the rotten parts of it." In the following year, the groundwork of his expected annual play, was the ungallant conduct of Mr. Walter Long to Miss Linley, afterwards Mrs. R. B. Sheridan. In the "Maid of Bath," Long is severely handled under the name of Flint, and Bath society is roughly illustrated.

Foote, characterising himself as a "popularity-monger," produced in the course of his next season the "Nabob," in which he made a combined charge on antiquaries and Anglo-East Indians generally, in the person of Sir Matthew Mite, in which was involved the individual caricature of General Richard Smith, whose father had been a cheesemonger. Some irascible Anglo-Indians called at Foote's house in Suffolk Street, behind the theatre, to

administer personal chastisement; but he bore himself with such tact, convinced them so conclusively that he had not had Smith in his mind, and persuaded them, by reading the play, that it was only naughty old Indians, generally, against whom he wrote, that they who came to horsewhip remained to dine, and make a night of it. The piece was afterwards supported by the *good* old ladies, to show their antagonism to Anglo-Indian naughtiness. Foote's "Nabob" afforded Walpole an excuse for withdrawing his name from the Society of Antiquaries. In the play, Mite is made an F.S.A.; and reads a foolish address to the Society, on Whittington and his Cat. This was in ridicule of Pegge, who had touched on the subject of the illustrious lad, but who was "gravelled" by the then inexplicable *Cat*. Walpole, affecting to see that Pegge and Foote had rendered the Society for ever ridiculous, took his name off the books; but *not* on that account. The true ground was that, in his own words:—"I heard that they intended printing some more foolish notes against my "Richard III." In 1773, Foote produced his Puppet-show-droll, "Piety in Pattens, or the Handsome Housemaid." In a dull and occasionally indecent introductory address, he professed to have chosen puppets for his actors, because the contemporary players were marked by inability! This was said to a densely crowded house, while Garrick and Barry were still at the head of their profession! In the piece itself, played by excellently contrived puppets, Foote intended to ridicule sentimental comedy, by professedly playing one, showing "how a maiden of low degree, by the mere effects of morality and virtue, raised herself to riches and honours." The sentiment here involved is, of course, made fun of; but the author failed to render it ridiculous, for the housemaid declines the riches and honours which she might have taken as the rewards of her morality and virtue. There ensued a riot, and some damage, after which Foote resorted to the novel process of resting the approbation of his piece, on a show of hands; but though there was a majority in his favour, the piece was not permanently successful. The author found compensation in his "Bankrupt," which was chiefly aimed at a speculating Baronet, but generally at all who were concerned in cheating their creditors. In 1774 a better, but a more cruel piece of wit was produced by "Foote, the celebrated buffoon," as Walpole had called him the year before. This was the "Cozeners." Mrs. Grieve, the woman who had extorted money, on pledge of procuring government appointments, and who had not only deceived

Charles Fox, by pretending to be able to marry him to an heiress, but had lent him money rather than miss his chariot from her door, was fair game, and was well exposed, in Mrs. Fleecem. This was delicate ground, however, for Foote, who was accused of having earned an annuity from Sir Francis Delaval, by bringing about a marriage between Sir Francis and the widow Lady Nassau Powlett, who had been a *very* intimate friend of Foote's. The cruelty of the satire lay in the character of Mrs. Simony, in which the vices of the once fashionable and lately hanged preacher, Dodd, were transferred to his then living widow! The ridicule of Lord Chesterfield's advice to his son is in far better taste. But Foote was now beginning to lose spirit, and he produced only one more piece, the "Capuchin," in which he played O'Donovan, in 1776. This piece was merely an alteration of the unlicensed "Trip to Calais," in which Foote had gibbetted the Duchess of Kingston. In the "Capuchin" he more rudely treated her Grace's Chaplain, Jackson, under the name of Viper; but the farce had small merit, and the only thing in connection with it, deserving of record is, that Jackson, while on trial for treason, in the time of the Irish Rebellion, destroyed himself. Such are the dramatic works of the Englist satirist, to compare whom with Aristophanes is an injustice to the Athenian, whose works Plato admired; and Chrysostom kept under his pillow! Such exhibition of character as Foote made, was described by Johnson, as a *vice;* and he, like Churchill, denied the actor's powers. The former maintained that Foote was never like the person he assumed to be, but only unlike Foote. He was as a painter who can pourtray a wen; and if a man hopped on one leg, Foote could do that to the life. Foote himself acknowledged that he pursued folly, and not vices, but he never mimicked in others the follies which were the most strongly marked in himself. Porson admired and often quoted his plays.

If there was little honesty in Foote's method of dealing with human weaknesses, so was there small courage in the spirit of the satirist. He could annoy Garrick by saying that his puppets would not be so large as life, "not larger in fact than Mr. Garrick," and could mimic him as refusing to engage Punch and his wife,—Mr. and Mrs. Barry,—for he could do so with impunity. But, Barry, six feet high, he never mimicked, and he was deterred from bringing Johnson on the stage, by a threat from the latter that he would break every bone in his body. Johnson, personally, disliked Foote, yet was forced into admiration by Foote's wonder-

ful powers of wit and laughter-compelling humour. Johnson, probably, was trying to excuse himself when he said that if the grave Betterton had come into the room where Foote was, the latter would have driven him from it by his broad-faced, obstreperous mirth. But Foote's conversational powers and wide knowledge, which charmed Fox, would have charmed Betterton too, and I do not think either could have been like Johnson's imaginary hostler, who, encountering Foote in a stable, thought him a comic fellow, but parted from him without a feeling of respect. Johnson thought less of Foote's conversation than Fox did; he described it as between wit and buffoonery, but admitted that Foote was a "fine fellow in his way," and he hoped somebody would write his life with diligence. Walpole tersely described him as "a Merry Andrew, but no fool." So the black boy thought, who hated the small beer which Foote (who sneered at Garrick for having been a wine-merchant) at one time brewed and sold, through a partner. The boy was so delighted with Foote's wit, as he waited on him at dinner, that he declared, in the kitchen, he could drink his bad beer for ever, and would certainly never complain of it again!

Foote had so little moral courage, and was so thin-skinned, that attacks upon him in the newspapers caused him exquisite pain, and he stooped so far to the Duchess of Kingston as to offer to suppress his "Trip to Calais," if she would put a stop to the assaults made on him through the press. The notorious lady, who was tried for bigamy, called him the "descendant of a Merry Andrew," and Foote informed her that though his good mother had lived to fourscore, she had never been married *but once*. Neither the claims of friendship nor a sense of courtesy could restrain Foote from a brutal jest when opportunity offered to make one. He had no more intimate friend than Charles Holland, who was at Drury Lane, from 1755 to 1769; and whose father was a baker, at Chiswick. Foote attended the funeral there, and on his return to town, he gaily remarked, that he "had seen Holland shoved into the family oven!" His courtesy was on a par with his sense of friendship and fellowship. When at Stratford, on the occasion of the Shakspeare Jubilee, Garrick's success embittered Foote's bitter spirit. A well-dressed gentleman there, civilly spoke to him on the proceedings. "Has Warwickshire, sir," said Foote, "the advantage of having produced you as well as Shakspeare?" "Sir," replied the gentleman, "I come from Essex." "Ah?" rejoined Foote, remembering that county was

famous for calves,—"from Essex! Who drove you?" The better samples of Foote's wit are to be found in his own comic pieces. In his "Lame Lover," how admirable is Mr. Sergeant Circuit's remark when his wife asks for money, and protests she must have it, as her honour is in pawn! "How a century will alter the meaning of words!" cries the Sergeant. "Formerly, chastity was the honour of women, and good faith and integrity the honour of men; but now, a lady who ruins her family by punctually paying her losses at play, and a gentleman who kills his best friend in a ridiculous quarrel, are your only tip-top people of honour!" Again, in the "Nabob," a hard hit is made at the bold profligacy of the period, in the words of Touchet (Baddeley) to Sir Mathew Mite (Foote), both of whom had been talking of hanging, or worse, hereafter, to the bribe-taking members of an election club;—"That's right, stick to that! for though the Christian Club may have some fears of the gallows, they don't value damnation a farthing!" Foote endeavoured to crush Whitfield by personal ridicule; but Whitfield was a far more useful man in his very wicked generation than Foote, who did not denounce wickedness, but mimicked the peculiarities of the reformer. "There is hardly a public man in England," says Davies, "who has not entered Mr. Foote's theatre with an aching heart, under the apprehension of seeing himself laughed at." Foote certainly read the pieces offered him for presentation. He kept Reed's "Register Office" for months, and thought so well of it as to turn its Mrs. Snarewell into Mrs. Cole, in his "Minor." That was little compared with his stealing a whole farce from Murphy; and the last was nothing, compared with his return for the hospitality bountifully afforded him by Lord Melcombe, at his villa, at Hammersmith Foote there studied the peculiarities of his good-natured host, and then produced him on the stage, in the character of the Patron! At the tables of his hosts, he was in fact, intolerable. He was dining with Lord Townsend after the duel between my lord and Lord Bellamont. Foote thought Lord Townsend might have disposed of his adversary in a more deadly way than by duel. "How so?" said the host, "You might have invited him to a dinner like this, and poisoned him!" exclaimed the ruffian.

Foote, when he produced his "Liar," in 1762, professed to have taken it from Lopez de Vega, that is, from the original source from which Corneille took his "Menteur." From the latter, Steele took his "Lying Lover," and a comparison of the

language of the two pieces will show that Foote plundered Steele, and hoped to escape by acknowledging obligations to an older author, whom he could not read! In the "Mayor of Garratt," Foote is detected in borrowing from "Epsom Wells," but with judgment. In the "Commissary," there is a theft from "Injured Love," in a joke which Hook stole, in his turn, from the "Commissary," to enliven his "Killing no Murder." One may forgive Foote, however, for his remark to John Rich, who had been addressing him curtly, as "*Mister*." Perceiving that Foote was vexed, Rich apologized, by saying, "I sometimes forget my own name." "I am astonished you could forget your own name," said Foote, "though I know very well that you are not able to write it!" Foote was angry with Johnson for saying that "he was an infidel, as a dog was an infidel; he had never thought of the matter."—"*I*, who have added sixteen new characters to the drama of my country!" said Foote. When he left hospitable General Smith's house, after a longer sojourn than usual, Foote's comment was: "I can't miss his likeness now, after such a good sitting." When Digges first appeared in Cato, we are told that Foote occupied a place in the pit, and raising his voice above the sound of the welcome given to the new actor, exclaimed, "He looks like a Roman Chimney sweeper on May-day." That Foote "deserved to be kicked out of the house for his cruelty," is a suggestion of Peake's, in which all men will concur. But did he deserve it? Chronology tends to disprove this story. Foote played for the last time on the 30th of July, 1777. His name does not appear in the bills after that day. Digges made his first appearance in London, as Cato, on the 14th of the following August, and if Foote went into the pit on that occasion, his envy and malevolence must have supplied him with the energy of which he had been deprived by paralysis and other infirmities.

Foote's vanity was as great as his cruelty. To indulging in the former he owed the loss of his leg. Being on a visit to Lord Mexborough, where the Duke of York and other noble guests were present, Foote foolishly boasted of his horsemanship; being invited to join the hunt the next day, he was ashamed to refuse, and at the very first burst the boaster was thrown, and his leg broken in two places. Even when his leg was amputated, he was helped by the incident, to an unworthy thought, namely, that he would now be able to mimic the one-legged George Faulkner, of Dublin, to the life! He bore, with fortitude, a visitation which gained for him a license to open the Haymarket, from the 15th of

May to the 15th of September. It opened his way to fortune. O'Keefe says, that it was pitiable to see him leaning against the wall of his stage dressing-room, while his servant dressed his cork leg, to suit the character in which his master was to appear. "He looked sorrowful," says O'Keefe, "but instantly resuming all his high comic humour and mirth, he hobbled forward, entered the scene, and gave the audience what they expected, their plenty of laugh and delight."

Among the fairest of Foote's sayings was the reply to Mr. Howard's intimation that he was about to publish a second edition of his *Thoughts and Maxims.* "Ay! second thoughts are best" Fair, too, was his retort on the person who alluded to his "game leg." "Make no allusion to my weakest part! Did I ever attack your head?" Garrick once took as a compliment, that his bust had been placed by Foote in the private room of the latter. "You are not afraid, I see, to trust me near your gold and bank-notes." "No," retorted the humourist, "you have no hands!" Quite as good was his reply to the tippling Duke of Norfolk, who asked him in what new character he should go to a masquerade. "Go sober!" said Foote.

Foote was sometimes beaten with his own weapons. After he had leased the Edinburgh Theatre from Ross, for three years, at five hundred guineas a year, a dispute arose, followed by a lawsuit, in which Foote was defeated. The Scottish agent for the vanquishing side, called on Foote, in London, with his bill of costs, which the actor had to defray. The *amari aliquid* having been got through, the player remarked that he supposed the agent was about to return to Edinburgh, like most of his countrymen, in the cheapest form possible. "Ay, ay," replied the agent, drily, tapping the pocket in which he had put the cash, "I shall travel —*on Foot!*" Foote looked rueful at the joke. Again, Churchill only said of him that he was, in self-conceit, an actor, and straightway Foote, who lived by degrading others, was "outrageously offended." Foote wrote a prose lampoon on Churchill and Lloyd, but did not publish it. Churchill, the bruiser, was not a safe man for Foote to attack, and the actor was fain to be satisfied with calling him the "clumsy curate of Clapham." But Churchill was a ruffian. His "Rosciad" drove Tom Davies from the stage. In vol. v. of Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*, there is the copy of an insolent letter Churchill wrote to a poor actor who intreated to be spared in an apprehended satire.

Foote took Wilkinson to Dublin in 1757, where they appeared

as instructor and pupil, in Foote's entertainment, called "Tea." Wilkinson convulsed the house, instead of being "stoned," (as Mrs. Woffington expected,) with his imitation of the two Dublin favourites, Margaret herself and Barry, in "Macbeth," and emboldened by the applause, he imitated Foote in his own presence. Foote's audacity was tripped up by the suddenness of the action; and he looked foolish. Subsequently, he called on Wilkinson, and threatened him with the duel, or chastisement, if he ever dared take further liberties with him on the stage. Wilkinson laughed at the impotently-angry ruffian, and all his brother actors laughed with him. Foote heard of Sir Francis Delaval's death, with tears; but he smiled through them, when he was told that the surgeons intended to examine the baronet's head. "I have known the head," he said, "for nearly a quarter of a century, and was never able to find anything in it!" But the wit's testimony to character is never to be taken without reserve. "Why does he come among us," he said of Lord Loughborough. "He is not only dull himself but the cause of dulness in others!" This is certainly not true, for this Scottish lawyer was remarkable in society for his hilarity, critical powers, and his store of epigrams and anecdotes. Lord Loughborough, moreover, merited the respect of Foote, as an old champion of the stage.

Foote was admirable in impromptu. When he once saw a sweep on a blood-horse, he remarked: "There goes Warburton on Shakspeare!" When he heard that the Rockingham Cabinet was fatigued to death and at its wit's end, he exclaimed, that it could not have been the length of the journey which had tired it! Again, when Lord Caermarthen, at a party, told him his handkerchief was hanging from his pocket, Foote replaced it, with a "Thank you, my lord; you know the company better than I." How much better does Foote appear thus, than when we find him coarsely joking on Lord Kelly's nose, while that lord was hospitably entertaining him; or sneering at Garrick for showing respect to Shakspeare, by a "jubilee"

After all, the enemies he had provoked, killed him. His fire and his physical powers were decaying when some of those enemies combined to accuse him of an enormous crime. He manfully met the charge, and proved his innocence. The anxiety, however, finished him. He had an attack of paralysis, played for the last time, on the 30th of July, 1777, in his "Maid of Bath," and after shifting restlessly from place to place, died on the 21st of October, at Dover. A few months previously, he had made over

the Haymarket Theatre to Colman, for a life annuity of £1,600, of which Foote lived but to receive one half-year's dividend. At the age of fifty-six, he thus passed away,—an emaciated old man,—and on Monday, the 27th of October, he was carried, by torchlight, to the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, whither so many of the brotherhood of players, had been carried before him.

The Haymarket season of that year indicated a new era, for in 1777, Edwin, as Hardcastle, Miss Farren, as Miss Hardcastle, Henderson, as Shylock, and Digges, in Cato, made their first appearance in London. The old Garrick period,—save in some noble relics (Macklin, the noblest of them all),—was clearly passing away.

Let us now consider what the dramatic poets produced from the period of Garrick's withdrawal to the end of the century.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OF AUTHORS, AND PARTICULARLY OF CONDEMNED AUTHORS.

From the retirement of Garrick to the close of the 18th century, tragic literature made no progress. It did not even reach the height of Fenton and Hughes, in whom Walpole discerned some faint sparkling of the merit of the older masters. The century which opened with Rowe concluded with Pye; both Poets Laureate, but of different qualities. "Tamerlane" and "Jane Shore" have not quite dropped from the list of acting plays; but who knows anything more of "Adelaide" than that it was insipid, and was distinguished for having made Mrs. Siddons and Kemble appear almost as insipid as the play. Godwin's "Antonio," played in 1800, was as complete a failure as Pye's "Adelaide." The old style was imitated in Dr. Stratford's "Lord Russell," which Walpole designated,—"frenzy steeped in laudanum." Mason's "Caractacus" produced less effect than D'Egville's ballet on the same subject in the succeeding century. Cumberland's "Battle of Hastings" was as near Shakspeare as Ireland's "Vortigern" was. Home's "Alfred" died, three days old; and Merry wrote a turgid and deadly dull tragedy, called "Lorenzo," remarkable for its rivalry with Shakspeare, in a description of the succeeding *passions* of human life, as *he* depicted its *stages*. Jephson was the favourite playwright of Walpole, who says of his "Law of Lombardy," that it was even "too rich" in language! but then Jephson always improved the passages to which Walpole objected! Bentley's "Philodamus," in spite of being pronounced by Gray, the best dramatic poem in the language, was laughed off the stage. Cumberland's "Carmelite" is a tragedy that terminates merrily! Cumberland was as much out of his line in tragedy as Reynolds, whose "Werter" and "Eloisa" brought him eight pounds! "And very good pay too, sir!" said

Macklin, "so go home, and write two more tragedies, and if you gain £4 by each of them, why, young man! the author of *Paradise Lost* will be a fool to you!" Hayley, (of whom Walpole said, "That sot Boswell is a classic, in comparison,") and Murphy, with undeniable powers, failed in their attempts at tragedy during this period. The Hon. John St. John, a failure in politics, made some money, but no renown, by his "Mary, Queen of Scots." Boaden was below the level of Pye himself. On the former's "Aurelio and Miranda" some criticism was made, before it was acted. The author was reading his play to the actors, when he remarked, that he knew nothing so terrible as having to read it before so critical an audience. "Oh, yes!" exclaimed Mrs. Powell, "there is something much more terrible." "What can that be?" asked Boaden, foolishly. "To be obliged to sit and hear it," was the reply of Lady Emma Hamilton's old fellow-servant.

But if tragedy languished, comedy was vivacious. This period gave us the "School for Scandal," perhaps the most faultless comedy of the whole century. It gave us Murphy's, "Know your own Mind;" the "Critic," that admirable offspring of the "Rehearsal;" Macklin's "Man of the World," the most muscular of comedies, (which contrasts so forcibly with the sketchy sentimental, yet not nerveless comedies of Holcroft;) General Burgoyne's "Heiress," which is not only superior to General Conway's "False Appearances" (a translation from a comedy by Boissy), but is, perhaps, the second best comedy of the period; Cumberland's "Jew" and "Wheel of Fortune;" Colman's serio-comic "Mountaineers," and the rattling "five-act farces" of Reynolds. Cumberland's "Jew" gave the ancient people a "lift in a new comedy," as one of them had asked the author to do, with an intimation that they would not forget it on the author's nights. He had already favourably alluded to the Jews in the *Observer*. At the head of all these, and many others, stood Sheridan's immortal comedy. In its brilliancy, the labour expended to effect it is all forgotten. "To my great astonishment," says Walpole, "there were more parts performed admirably in the 'School for Scandal,' than I almost ever saw in any play. Mrs. Abington was equal to the first of her profession; Yates, Parsons, Miss Pope and Palmer, all shone. It seemed a marvellous resurrection of the stage." When he had read the play, he came to the conclusion that it was "rapid and lively, but far from containing the wit he had expected, on seeing

it acted." Mrs. F. Kemble says that the wit of the "School for Scandal" is far above our own audiences, even now! It is due to country audiences to have it said, that they welcomed the new and purer style of comedy as heartily as they rejected the old, and they would not listen even to expurgated plays of Congreve, Wycherley and Vanbrugh, when the comedies of those writers still drew audiences in town. Cumberland, in his comedies, generally had faintly defined groups round one strongly defined figure. Reynolds, a series of extravagant groups without any prominent character. Cumberland wrote sermons, Reynolds painted caricatures. Cumberland's heroines are loving, kind creatures; his heroes, coy. Reynolds's ladies are nerveless, his men of much the same quality. Morton, as a writer of comedy, had more power than Reynolds, but he mingled tragedy with his farce, as in the "Way to get Married," where a father and daughter are about to shoot themselves. The exaggerated plays of these authors do not belong to literature. Then, of the ladies who wrote for the stage during the latter half of the last century: There is Hannah More, who introduces into "Percy" (an adaptation of "Gabrielle de Vergy") a sermon, of which the first part denounces war, and the second draws a character of the Saviour! Of Mrs. Cowley, kinswoman to Gay, fastidious Walpole declared that she was as freely spoken as Aphra Behn. She affected, like Congreve, to despise being an "author," and showed skill in shaping old characters into new, as well as in defending herself against the acute people who had "a good nose for inuendo." In tragedy, she was not so successful; and she winced at the epigram of Parsons, on her "Fate of Sparta," which said:—

> "Ingenious Cowley! while we view'd
> Of Sparta's sons, the lot severe,
> We caught the Spartan fortitude,
> And saw their woes, without a tear."

She wrote with great rapidity, and with success; for her "Runaway" brought her £800, and her "Belle's Stratagem" 1200 guineas.

Of Mrs. Griffith's plays, not one is now remembered; but the author and actress is remarkable for having published, as guides to young people, the correspondence of herself and husband, before marriage, under the title of *The Letters of Harry and Frances.* An incident connected with this play, will show how ungallant players could be to female poets, and how free they could be with

their audience. In the third act, when Powell and Holland were on the stage, the hissing was universal; and at the end of it, the two actors thrust their heads out from behind the drop curtain, and implored the house to damn the piece at once, and release them from having to utter any more nonsense!

The gentle Frances Brooke's novels are better than her dramas, save the pretty musical farce, "Rosina," in which she has so cleverly secularised the scriptural story of Ruth and Boaz. Elizabeth Inchbald's plays are as good as her novels. In both, the romantic daughter of a Suffolk farmer exhibited a skill and refinement, the latter of which she must have acquired after the period when, a wayward and beautiful girl of sixteen, she ran away from home, and manifested wonderful ability in framing stories of her own, to mislead the curious. Her first appearance in London was as Bellario in "Philaster" After the death of her husband, old enough to be her father,—the "Garrick of Norwich,"—whose marriage with her was as romantically begun as it was singularly ended, in 1779, at Leeds, she took to writing for the stage, on which she was a respectable actress In her plays, the virtues are set in action; and there is much elegance in her style. She retired from the stage in 1789, wrote novels, saved money, lived frugally, helped her poor relations, dressed neatly, in a gown worth twopence, was her own servant, yet rode abroad in countesses' carriages, destroyed her own memoirs, lest they should give pain to others, and died in 1823, a good Catholic.

Petulant Sophia Lee, daughter of a country actor, excelled in the skill with which she mingled broad comedy with natural pathos,—as in her "Chapter of Accidents." Lady Wallace resembled the female writers of the preceding century only in vulgarity, and not in their poor wit. Then, there was Hannah Brand, schoolmistress, like Hannah More; poet, and actress, mad with much learning, or with very little, of which she thought very much; and proud as an *artchangel*, as she pronounced the word! The great feat of imperious Miss Brand was in her "Huniades," which, on its failure, she altered, by leaving the whole part of Huniades out! She called the incomprehensible fragment "Agmunda," and heard it hissed (she playing the heroine), to her great disgust. Mariana Starke, too, reckons among the unsuccessful authoresses. Her "Widow of Malabar" imitated from the French, excited no sympathy, in spite of the beauty of Miss Brunton, who played the Widow. It has been said, that the failure of Miss Lee's "Almeyda" shows that the public was

not partial to tragedy; but "Almeyda" was only a tragedy of the old heroic stamp,—full of love, hatred, sublime generosity, and general exaggeration. Walpole's "Mysterious Mother," proved that true dramatic power had not departed, and that a play, which was as fit for representation as the "Orphan," had for its author one who "could unite all the energies of genius with all the graces of art."

The century was within a year of its close when Miss De Camp taught parents not to cross the first love of their children, in "First Faults." Then Joanna Baillie finished one and began another century, with her series of Plays of the Passions; none of which was intended for the stage, or succeeded when it was represented. The old Scots, who shuddered at "Douglas" being written by a minister, must have been stricken with awe, at the idea of the daughter of the divinity professor at Glasgow composing three profane tragedies in a single year.

Music and singing were not uncommonly introduced into our early plays, and they ranked among the chief attractions of our masques, down to the reign of Charles I. Under the Commonwealth, and in the reign of Charles II., we had pieces sung in recitative, till Locke awoke melodious echoes by his music for "Psyche," "Macbeth," and the "Tempest;" and Purcell excelled Lawes in vigour and in harmony, and composed music to the words of Dryden. Our first English male stage-singers were simply actors, with good, but not musically-trained voices. Walker, the original Macheath, could "sing a good song," but he was a tragedian; and some of our songtresses might be similarly described. Mrs. Tofts, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Miss Campion, were trained vocalists. The "Beggars' Opera," and "Artaxerxes," mark epochs; and after Arne, arose Linley, Jackson, Arnold, Dibdin, and Shield, as composers; and Leoni and Miss Brown, the former sweeter than Vernon, and the lady rich in expression, secured rare laurels for themselves and the "Duenna," in which opera they played the principal characters. Jackson's music in "The Lord of the Manor," brought Mrs. Crouch, then Miss Phillips, into notice; but it was not till Stephen Storace began his career, that concerted pieces and grand finales were introduced, and English opera was rendered more complete. With his operas are most associated the names of Crouch, Kelly, and Braham—which last name, and that of Mrs. Billington, are the brightest in the operatic annals of the close of the eighteenth, and opening of the nineteenth century.

With operas and musical entertainments, the romantic drama greatly flourished, too, for awhile. Of real romantic drama, the most successful was the sensational "Castle Spectre," the merit of which was pointed out by a joke of Sheridan's. In a dispute with Lewis, the author, the latter offered, in support of his opinion, to bet all the money which that drama had brought into the treasury. "No," said Sheridan, "I'll not do that; but I don't mind betting all it's worth!" The Lord Chamberlain prevented many a bad play from vexing the ears of an audience, but the licence was withheld, not because the play was bad, but because of its political allusions. Thus, Lady Wallace's "Whim" was prohibited, and Mr. Eyre (an actor's) tragedy, the "Maid of Normandy," was refused a licence for the Bath theatre, on account of its allusions to France.

The dramatic poets accepted their failures with various degrees of feeling. Rowe ranks among the hilarious condemned, by his failure in comedy.

In Rowe's comedy, the "Biter," the jokes fell lifeless, to the great disgust of Rowe, who was in the pit. As the audience yawned or hissed, the author set them the example he would have them follow, and at every jest he led the way with an explosion of laughter, which must have become the more lugubrious on every repetition. Aaron Hill took his failures more calmly. Mrs. Centlivre was not equally patient with *her* public. Dennis was, perhaps, the most irritable of his race. When his adaptation of "Coriolanus" ("The Invader of his Country") failed, in 1719. Dennis thundered against Cibber and his colleagues, and invoked against them the vengeance of the Lord Chamberlain! Theobald took another course; and when the pit hissed his pieces, he abused the "little critics," in a preface, scorned their "ill-nature," and appealed to "better judges." More touching was the way in which the aged Southerne, in 1726, took the condemnation of his "Money, the Mistress," at Lincoln's Inn Fields. The audience hissed mercilessly. The old man was standing at the wing with Rich, who asked him, if "he heard what they were doing." "No, sir," said Southerne, calmly, "I am very deaf!" Fielding took disapprobation with indifference. In 1743, his "Wedding Day" was produced. Garrick had asked the author to suppress a scene which, he thought, would imperil the piece. Fielding refused. "If the scene is not a good one," said he "let 'em find it out." This scene *did* excite violent hissing; and Garrick left the stage for the green-room, violently disturbed. "There," says Murphy,

"the author was indulging his genius, and solacing himself with a bottle of champagne. He had, at this time, drank pretty plentifully; and cocking his eye at the actor, while streams of tobacco trickled down from the corner of his mouth, 'What's the matter, Garrick?' said he; 'what are they hissing now?' 'Why the scene I begged you to retrench. I knew it wouldn't do; and they have so frightened me, that I shall not be able to collect myself the whole night.' 'Oh! d— 'em!' replies the author, 'they *have* found it out, have they?'" Fielding's inefficiency in the construction of a plot, is indicated by a toast he once gave, of "Perdition to him who invented *fifth acts!*" Fielding was bold enough to publish one unlucky play, not "as it was acted," but "as it was damned at the Theatre Royal."

Some authors have taken their fate swaggeringly; others have whistled, some have sung, a few have reasoned over it, one or two have acknowledged the condemnation; not one, except Bentley, has confessed that it was just. When the best scenes in the "Good-natured Man" were bringing down hisses and imperilling the comedy, Goldsmith fell into a tremor, from which the bare success of the play could not relieve him. But he concealed his torture, and went to the club and talked loud and sang his favourite songs, but neither eat nor drank, though he affected to do both. He sate out the whole of the company, save Johnson, and when the two were alone, the disappointed author burst into tears, and swore, something irreverently, that he would never write again. Johnson behaved like a true man, for he comforted Goldsmith, and never betrayed his friend's weakness. *That*, of course, Goldsmith was sure to do for himself. Long after, when they were dining with Percy, at the chaplain's table at St. James's, Goldsmith referred to the dreadful night, the hisses, his sufferings, and his feigned extravagance. Johnson listened in astonishment. "I thought it had all been a secret between you and me, Doctor," said he, "and I am sure I would not have said anything about it for the world."

Some authors have refused to despair of success, however adverse the audience may have been. Towards the middle of the last century, the public sat, night after night, incapable of comprehending the mysteries and allusions of Mitchell's "Highland Fair, or the Union of the Clans." At length, on the fourth night, the audience took to laughing at the nonsense, and as the last act proceeded, the louder did the hilarity become. Poor Mitchell took it all for approval, and going up to Wilks, with an air of

triumph, he exclaimed, "De'il o' my saul, sare, they begin to taak the humour at last!" Mrs. Siddon's Bath friend, Dr. Whalley, ranks among authors, who have accepted condemnation with a joke. His "Castle of Montval" was yawned at, but as it was acted beyond the third night, the doctor went down to Mr. Peake, the treasurer, to know what benefit might have accrued to him. It amounted to nothing. "I have been," said the author, (an old picquet player), "piqued and re-piqued." Sheridan kept his self-possession under control. His "Rivals" was at first a failure. Cumberland, the most sensitive author in the world, under condemnation, declared that he could not laugh at Sheridan's comedy. "That is ungrateful of him," said Sheridan, "for I have laughed at a tragedy of his from beginning to end!" But this not having been said in Cumberland's hearing, was less severe than a remark made by Lord Shelburne. In the House of Lords he referred to the authorship of Lord Carlisle, who had written a tragedy called "The Step-mother,"—mild of speech and terrible of incident, and a model of taste to modern writers and translators. "The noble Lord," said he, "has written a comedy." "No, no!" interrupted Lord Carlisle, "a tragedy! a tragedy!" "Oh! I beg pardon," resumed Lord Shelburne, "I thought it was a comedy!" The dramatists whom Cumberland "adapted," declined to be involved in his reverses. After his "Joanna," from Kotzebue, had been damned, the German author took care to record in the public papers that the passages hissed by the English public were not his, but additions made by Cumberland. Sir Fretful found consolation. "I have survived," he says, "all true national taste, and lived to see buffoonery, spectacle, and puerility so effectually triumph, that now to be repulsed from the stage is to be recommended to the closet; and to be applauded by the theatre is little less than a passport to the puppet-show." He was not altogether wrong. In 1784, Costello's dogs brought £7,000 profit to Wroughton, at Sadlers' Wells. According to the author of the "*Druryad*" (1798), Covent Garden, towards the close of the century, failed to keep up the character of the drama. "Quick was the Georgium Sidus of the play;" and

> "By Reynold's taught, see Lewis frisk and climb,
> And Follett's carrots grace the pantomime;"

while dramatic dignity was upheld at Drury Lane by the Kemble family, King, Palmer, Suett, Bannister, Mrs. Jordan, and other performers of celebrity.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE AUDIENCES OF THE LAST HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, if a quiet man in the pit ventured on making a remark to his neighbour, who happened to be a "nose-puller," and who disagreed with the remark, the speaker's nose was sure to be painfully wrung by the "puller." In the same period, those very nose-pullers sat quietly, merely grimacing, when the great people in the boxes found it convenient to spit into the pit! But, sometimes the house, pit and all, was full of great people. On the night of the 7th March, 1751, Drury had been hired by some noble amateurs, who acted the tragedy of "Othello," thus cast in the principal characters. Othello, Sir Francis Delaval; Iago, by John, subsequently (1786) Lord Delaval; Cassio, E. Delaval; Roderigo, Captain Stephens; Desdemona, Mrs. Quon (sister of Sir Francis, and later, the wife of Lord Mexborough); Emilia, Mrs. Stephens. Macklin superintended the rehearsals, and Walpole says of the amateurs, in his characteristic way: "They really acted so well, that it is astonishing they should not have had sense enough not to act at all! . . . . . The rage was so great to see this performance, that the House of Commons adjourned at three o'clock on purpose. The footman's gallery was strung with blue ribands. What a wise people! what an august senate!" The presence of blue ribands, in place of livery tags, in the footman's gallery, was owing to the circumstance that tickets were issued numerously enough to completely fill the house, but without indicating to what part of the house the bearers would be admitted. The first who arrived took the best places; and tardy peers, knights of the garter, their wives and ladies, were content to occupy the gallery, for once, rather than have no places at all.

When Garrick, in 1754, found that he could not fill Drury Lane, notwithstanding the ability of his company of actors, unless he played himself, and that his own strength was not equal to the task of playing without intermission, he brought forward a magnificent ballet-pantomime, called the "Chinese Festival." The presence of foreign dancers offended John Bull! Patriotism, and his sense of religious propriety, were shocked at the idea of his condescending to be amused by Papists! George II., by *his* presence, on the first night, seemed to sanction favouritism of the enemy and the hostile church. Aggravated by that presence, the pit heaved into a storm, which raged the more as the old King sat and enjoyed the tempest! As the "spectacle" was repeated, so was the insurrection against it; but the "quality" interfering, a new element of bitterness was superadded. The boxes pronounced pit and galleries "vulgar;" and in return the boxes were assailed with epithets as unsavoury as any flung at the dancers. Gentlemen in the boxes drew their swords, leaped down into the pit, pricked about them in behalf of "gentility," and got terribly mauled for their pains. The galleries looked on, shouting approbation, and indiscriminately pelting both parties. Not so the fair, who occupied the boxes. They, on seeing the champions of propriety and of themselves, being overpowered in the pit, pointed the offenders out to the less eager beaux who tarried in their vicinity, and who, for their very honour's sake, felt themselves compelled to out with their bodkins, drop into the surging pit, and lay about them, stoutly or faintly, according to their constitutions. The stronger arms of the plebeians carried the day; and when these had smitten their aristocratic opponents, they celebrated their victory with the accustomed Vandalism. They broke up benches, tore down hangings, smashed mirrors, crashed the harpsichords (always the first of the victims in the orchestra); and finally, charging on to the stage, cut and slashed the scenery in all directions.

On our side of the Channel, royal personages have been more amusingly rude than the inferior folk. The young King of Denmark who married the sister of George III., often visited our theatres, in 1768. At the play of the "Provoked Husband," it was observed that he applauded every passage in which matrimony was derided; which was an uncivil proceeding, as his wife was an English princess! In October, he commanded "Jane Shore," during the performance of which he fell fast asleep, and remained so, to the amusement of the audience and the annoy-

ance of Mrs. Bellamy, who played Alicia. That haughty beauty, having to pronounce the words, "Oh, thou false lord!" she approached the royal box, and uttered them in such a piercing tone, that the King awoke in amazement, but with perception enough to enable him to protest, that he would not be married to a woman with such a voice though she had the whole world for a dowry.

Gross and unpardonable liberties were taken by the actors with their patron George III., who laughed at the sallies, louder and longer than even the hilarious audience! Sir Robert Walpole had been readier to take offence than King George. He could smile at the innendoes of the "Beggars' Opera;" but when he was deeply interested in the success of his Excise Bill, and an actor sneeringly alluded to it, in his presence, the minister went behind the scenes, and asked if the words uttered were in the part. It was confessed that they were not; and thereupon Sir Robert raised his cane, and gave the offending player a sound thrashing.

The loyalty of a London audience was shown by their hissing Bannister for seeming not to join in "God Save the King." This was at a period when party spirit ran high, and republicans so affected to hate the anthem "God Save the King," that at Brighton, Salisbury, and Lynn, coercion was used to prevent their entering the theatre, where they interrupted the actors who sang it. Indeed, the loyalty of the actors to "King and Country" could not be doubted. When the Emperor of the French was collecting a host for the invasion of this country, the actors were among the first to enrol themselves as volunteers; and it was not an unusual thing to find the theatre closed, on account of the unavoidable absence of the principal performers, summoned to drill, or other military service then rigidly enforced. On the other hand, there were disloyal factions even in London audiences, and these drove "Venice Preserved" from the stage, for a time, by the furious applause which they gave to passages in favour of Liberty, and which applause was supposed to indicate hostility to the British Constitution!

A real hostility was always evinced on the part of the audience, if an attempt was made to enforce order by introducing even a single soldier to effect what should be done by the servants of the house, or the constables on duty. In 1784, when Holcroft's "Follies of a Day," (the English version of Beaumarchais' "Marriage de Figaro,") was running, a disturbance took place in

the green boxes, in consequence of a young Scottish lady refusing to give up a place she had assumed, but which had been previously engaged. Her husband occupied a seat to which he had a right. The lady would not yield, and after box-keepers and constables had prayed, threatened, and pulled in vain, a soldier was summoned, and he carried the lady into the lobby, after a struggle, in which she lost all the upper part of her dress and adornments. Then the ire of the audience burst forth, and the play was peremptorily stopped till Lewis came forward and disavowed the act as contrary to the sanction and principles of the management. "Aye, aye!" cried a gentleman in the boxes, "don't give us French principles as well as French plays; and remember that soldiers are not to coerce a British audience. *We* are for liberty!"

At the Haymarket Theatre, on the third of February, 1794, when fifteen lives were lost in the rush to see the King and Queen, the royal family were kept in ignorance of the catastrophe from their arrival till the moment they were about to depart! On another occasion, the night of the eleventh of May, 1800, at Drury Lane, when Hatfield fired a pistol at the King, his Majesty was less moved than any of his attendants. The Marquis of Salisbury urged the King to withdraw. "Sir," said George III., "you discompose me as well as yourself; I shall not stir one step."

In the old cosey theatre at Windsor, where each part of the house might have shaken hands with the other, the King and Queen used to retire at the end of the third act, to take tea, and then the Windsor or Queen's ale used to circulate in the gallery. The King would applaud the actors by name: *bravo Quick! bravo Suett!* and farces and pantomimes were to him more welcome than Shakspeare, on whom the King once made this singular comment. "Was there ever such stuff as great part of Shakspeare? only one must not say so!"—"But what think you? what! Is there not sad stuff?" For Shakspeare, he had less regard than his father. Prince Frederick once suggested that the whole of Shakspeare's plays should be represented, under his patronage, —at the rate of a play a week, but difficulties supervened, and the suggestion made no progress.

Down to a late period of the last century, Garrick and his fellows laboured under a serious disadvantage, when attempting to give full effect to stage illusions,—I allude to the crowding of the stage by a privileged part of the public. In spite of this, Garrick could render seemingly real, the frantic sorrows of Lear,

and the youthful joyousness of Master Johnny. In Dublin, he was once playing King Lear, to the Cordelia of Mrs. Woffington, when one Irish gentleman, who was present, advanced, put his arm round Cordelia's waist, and thus held her, while she answered with loving words to her father's reproaches. When Garrick resolved, once and for ever, in 1762, to keep the public from the stage, there was an outcry on the part of the players, who declared that, on benefit nights, when seats and boxes, at advanced prices, were erected on the stage, they should lose the most munificent of their patrons, if these were prohibited from coming behind the curtain. A compromise followed, and Garrick agreed to compensate for driving a part of the audience from the stage, by enlarging the house. Thus, one evil was followed by another, for the larger houses were less favourable to the actor and less profitable to managers, but stage spectacle became more splendid and effective than ever. On the old benefit-nights, the confusion was extraordinary. When Quin returned, to play Falstaff for Ryan's benefit, he was several minutes forcing his way to the front, through the dense crowd which impeded his path. As for Mrs. Cibber, Wilkinson had seen her as Juliet, lying on an old couch, in the tomb of the Capulets, all solitary, with a couple of hundred of the audience surrounding her.

The author of a "Letter to Mr. Garrick," remarks, that it was then usual in France, for the audience of a new and well-approved tragedy, to summon the author before them, that he might personally receive the tribute of public approbation due to his talents. "Nothing like this," he says, "ever happened in England."—"And I may say, never will!" is the comment of the author of a rejoinder to the above letter, who adds:—"I know not how far a French audience may carry their complaisance, but were I in the author's case, I should be unwilling to trust to the civility of an English pit or gallery. . . . . Suppose that every play that is offered should be received, and suppose that some one of them should happen to be damned, might not an English audience, on this occasion, call for the author, not to partake of their applause, indeed, but to receive the tokens of their displeasure?" Such audiences were despotic, and yet they could bend to the despotism of an individual. Our own gallery was once famous for the presence of a trunkmaker, whose loud applause or shrill censure, used to settle the destiny of authors. The house followed, according as the trunkmaker howled or hammered. Then, we had not only arbitrary, but sentimental, auditors. In the *Morning Post*,

of September 27, 1776, we are told that:—"A gentleman, said to be a captain in the army, was so very much agitated on Miss Brown's appearance on Wednesday night, that it was imagined it would be necessary to convey him out of the house; but a sudden burst of tears relieved him, and he sat out the farce with tolerable calmness and composure. The gentleman is said to have entertained a passion for that lady last winter, and meant to have asked her hand as a man of honour, but—!"

But we must leave these audiences of the last century, for an actor who is about to leave *them*,—Charles Macklin.

CHAPTER XL.

CHARLES MACKLIN.

A LITTLE child, about the last year of the reign of William III., a boy who is said to have been born *Anno Domini*, 1690, was taken to Derry, to kiss the hand of, and wish a happy new year to, the old head of his family, Mr. M'Laughlin. The M'Laughlins were held to be of royal descent, and the Mr. M'Laughlin in question to be the representative of some line of ancient kings of Ireland! In the summer of 1797, an old actor was dying out in Tavistock Row, Covent Garden. Hull and Munden, and Davies and Ledger, and friends on and off the stage, occasionally looked in and talked of old times with that ancient man, whose memory was weaker than his frame. He had been a rare player in his day. He had acted with contemporaries of Betterton; had seen, or co-operated with, every celebrity of the stage since; and did not withdraw from that stage till after Braham, who was among us but as yesterday, had sung his first song on it. He gave counsel to old Charles Mathews, and he may have seen little Edmund Kean being carried in a woman's arms from the neighbourhood of Leicester Square to Drury Lane Theatre, where the pale little fellow had to act an imp in a pantomime. The old man, carried, in the summer last named, to his grave in the corner of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, was the child who had done homage to a traditional king of Ireland, so many years before.

Charles Macklin represents contradiction, sarcasm, irritability, restlessness. It all came of a double source, his descent and the line of characters which he most affected. His father was a stern Presbyterian farmer, in Ulster; his mother, a rigid Roman Catholic. At the siege of Derry, three of his uncles were among the besiegers, and three among the besieged; and he had another, a Roman Catholic priest, who undertook to educate him, but who

consigned the mission to Nature. I have somewhere read that at five-and-thirty, Macklin could not read, perfectly; but at eight or nine, he played Monimia, in private theatricals at the house of a good Ulster lady, who looked after him more carefully than the priest, and more tenderly than Nature. Macklin is said to have succeeded perfectly, and in voice, feature, and action, to have counterfeited that most interesting of orphans with great success. It created in him a disgust for the vocation to which he was destined,—that of a saddler,—from which he ran away before he was apprentice enough to sew a buckle on a girth; and the lad made off for the natural attraction of all Irish lads,—Dublin. He entered Trinity College as a badge-man, or porter, which illustrious place and humble office, he quitted in 1710. Except that he turned stroller, suffered the sharp pangs which strollers feel, and enjoyed the roving life led by players on the tramp, little is here known of him. He served some five years to this rough apprenticeship, and then appeared at Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1725, as Alcander, in "Œdipus." His manner of speaking was found too "familiar," that is, too *natural*. He had none, he said, of "the hoity-toity, sing-song, delivery" then in vogue. Rich recommended him to *go to grass again;* and accordingly to green fields and strolling he returned.

Some manager had his eye on Macklin at Southwark Fair, in 1730, for he passed thence again to Lincoln's Inn Fields. He played small parts, and was thankful to get them, not improving his cast till he went to Drury Lane, in 1733, when he played the elder Cibber's line of characters, and in 1735, created Snip, in the farce of the "Merry Cobbler," and came thereby in peril of his life. One evening, a fellow-actor, Hallam, grandfather of merry Mrs. Mattocks, took from Macklin's dressing-room a wig, which the latter wore in the farce. The players were in the "scene room," some of them seated on the settle in front of the fire, when a quarrel broke out between Hallam and Macklin, which was carried on so loudly that the actors then concluding the first piece were disturbed by it. Hallam, at length, surrendered the "property," but he used words of such offence, that Macklin, equally unguarded in language, and more unguarded in action, struck at him with his cane, in order to thrust him from the room. Unhappily, the cane penetrated Hallam's eye, to the brain, and killed him. Macklin's deep concern could not save him from standing at the bar of the Old Bailey, on a charge of murder. The jury returned him guilty of manslaughter, without

malice aforethought, and the contrite actor was permitted to return to his duty.

Among the friends he possessed was Mrs. Booth, widow of Barton Booth, in whose house was domiciled as companion, a certain Grace Purvor, who could dance almost as well as Santlow herself, and had otherwise great attractions. Colley Cibber loved to look in at Mrs. Booth's, to listen to Grace's well-told stories; Macklin went thither to tell his own to Grace, and John, Duke of Argyle, flitted about the same lady, for purposes of his own, which he had the honesty to give up, when Macklin informed him of the honourable interest he took in the friend of Mrs. Booth. Macklin married Grace, and the latter proved excellent both as wife and actress.

For some years, Macklin himself failed to reap the distinction he coveted. The attainment was made, however, in 1741, when he induced Fleetwood to revive Shakspeare's "Merchant of Venice," with Macklin for Shylock. There was a whisper that he was about to play the Jew, as a serious character. His comrades laughed, and the manager was nervous. The rehearsals told them nothing, for there, Macklin did little more than walk through the part, lest the manager should prohibit the playing of the piece, if the nature of the reform Macklin was about to introduce should make him fearful of consequences. In some such dress as that we now see worn by Shylock, Macklin, on the night of the 14th of February, 1741, walked down the stage, and looking through the eyelet-hole in the curtain, saw the two ever-formidable front rows of the pit occupied by the most highly-dreaded critics of the period. The house was densely crowded. He turned from his survey, calm and content, remarking, "Good! I shall be tried to night by a Special Jury!"

There was little applause on his entrance, yet the people were pleased at the aspect of a Jew whom Rembrandt might have painted. The opening scene was spoken in familiar, but earnest accents. Not a hand yet gave token of approbation, but there occasionally reached Macklin's ears, from the two solemn rows of judge and jury in the pit, the sounds of "Good!"—"Very good!"—"Very well, indeed!"—and he passed off, more gratified by this, than by the slight general applause intended for encouragement. As the play proceeded, so did his triumph grow. In the scene with Tubal, which Doggett in Lansdowne's version had made so comic, he shook the hearts, and not the sides of the audience. The sympathies of the house went all for Shylock;

and at last, a storm of acclamation roared pleasantly over Macklin. So far all was well; but the trial scene had yet to come. It came; and there the triumph culminated. The actor was not loud, nor grotesque; but Shylock was natural, calmly confident, and so terribly malignant, that when he whetted his knife, to cut the forfeit from that bankrupt there, a shudder went round the house, and the profound silence following, told Macklin that he held his audience by the heart-strings, and that his hearers must have already acknowledged the truth of his interpretation of Shakspeare's Jew. When the act-drop fell, Old Drury shook again with the tumult of applause. The critics went off to the coffee-houses in a state of pleasurable excitement. As for the other actors, Quin (Antonio), must have felt the master-mind of that night. Mrs. Pritchard (Nerissa), excellent judge as she was, must have enjoyed the terrible grandeur of that trial-scene; and even Kitty Clive (Portia) could not have dared, on that night, to do what she ordinarily made Portia do, in the disguise of young Bellario; namely, mimic the peculiarities of some leading lawyer of the day. And Macklin?—Macklin remarked, as he stood among his fellows, "I am not worth fifty pounds in the world; nevertheless, on this night am I Charles the Great!"

Pope pronounced Macklin to be the Jew that Shakspeare drew; and he asked the actor, why he dressed Shylock in a red hat? Macklin replied, it was because he had read that the Jews in Venice were obliged, by law, to wear a hat of that colour;—which was true.

Macklin was proud and impetuous, and often lost engagements, by offending; and regained them by publicly apologising. He was an actor well established in favour, when, in the season of 1745-6, he made his first appearance as an author in an *apropos* tragedy for the '45 era, "Henry VII., or the Popish Impostor." A crude work, six weeks in the doing. It settles, however, in some degree, the time when Macklin left the Church of Rome for that of England. It must have been prior to the period in which he wrote the above-named piece. After it took place, he used to describe himself "as staunch a Protestant as the Archbishop of Canterbury, and on the same principle!"

After playing during four seasons at Drury Lane, Macklin spent, from 1748 to 1750, in Dublin, where he and his wife were to receive £800 a year. He delighted the public, and helped to ruin the manager, Sheridan. From 1750 to 1754 Macklin was at Covent Garden, where one of his most extraordinary parts was

Mercutio, to Barry's Romeo!—a part for which he was utterly unfit, but which he held to be one of his best!—not inferior to Wooodward's! His view of the rival Romeos, too, had something original in it. Barry, he said, in the garden scene, came on with a lordly swagger, and talked so loud that the servants ought to have come out and tossed him in a blanket; but Garrick sneaked into the garden, like a thief in the night!

In 1754 Macklin introduced his daughter, with a prologue, and withdrew, himself, from the stage, to appear in a new character, that of master of a tavern, where dinners might be had at 4*s.* a head, including any sort of wine the guest might choose to ask for! The house was under the Piazza, in Covent Garden; and Mr. Macklin's "Great Room in Hart Street" subsequently became George Robins' auction-room. I do not like to contemplate Macklin in this character, bringing in the first dish, the napkin over his arm, at the head of an array of waiters, who robbed him daily; that done, he steps backwards to the sideboard, bows, and then directs all proceedings by signs. The cloth drawn, he advances to the head of the table, makes another servile bow, fastens the bell-rope to the chair, and hoping he has made everthing agreeable, retires!

The lectures on the drama and ancient art, and the debates which followed, in his Great Room, the "British Inquisition," were not in much better taste. The wits of the town found excellent sport in interrupting the debaters, and few were more active in this way than Foote. "Do you know what I am going to say?" asked Macklin. "No," said Foote, "*do you?*" On the 25th of January, 1755, Charles Macklin was in the list of what the *Gentleman's Magazine* used to politely call the "B—ts," as failing in the character of vintner, coffee-man, and chapman. His examination only showed that he had failed in prudence. He had been an excellent father, and on his daughter's education alone he had expended £1,200. He remained disengaged till December 12th, 1759, when he appeared at Drury Lane, as Shylock, and Sir Archy Macsarcasm, in "Love à la Mode," a piece of his own. From the profits received on each night of its being acted, Macklin stipulated that he should have a share during life. After a season at Drury, he passed the next at the Garden, and in 1763 re-appeared in Dublin, under rival managers, and with more profit to himself than to them.

In 1769, the papers record the demise of his mother at Cloncurry, where "lived respected, and lamented died, Mrs. Alice

O'Mealey, the mother of Mr. Macklin, aged ninety-nine." She seems to have been twice married; and was twenty years of age when Macklin was born in 1690. In 1773 he returned to Covent Garden, where he made an attempt at Macbeth, which brought on that famous theatrical "row" which Macklin laid to the enmity of Reddish and Sparks. With intervals of rest, Macklin continued to play, without increase of fame, till 1780, when he produced his original play, the "Man of the World," and created, at the age, probably, of ninety years, Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, one of the most arduous characters in a great actor's repertory. The Lord Chamberlain licensed this admirable piece with great reluctance, for though the satire was general, it was severe, and susceptible of unpleasant and particular application. Shylock, Sir Pertinax, and Sir Archy, were often played by the old actor, whose memory did not begin to fail till 1788, when it first tripped, as he was struggling to play Shylock. The aged player tottered to the lights, talked of the inexplicable terror of mind which had come over him, and asked for indulgence to so aged a servant; and then he went on, now brilliantly, now all uncertain and confused. He was to play the same character for his benefit, on May 7th, 1789, and went into the green room dressed for the part. Anticipating it might fail, the manager had requested Ryder, an actor of merit, to be ready to supply Macklin's place. The old performer seeing good Miss Pope, in the green room, asked her if she was to play that night. "To be sure I am, dear sir," she said; "you see I am dressed for Portia." Macklin looked vacantly at her, and, in an imbecile tone of voice, remarked, "I had forgotten; who plays Shylock?" "Who? why you, sir; you are dressed for it!" The aged representative of the Jew was affected: he put his hand to his forehead, and in a pathetic tone deplored his waning memory; and then went on the stage; spoke, or tried to speak, two or three speeches, struggled with himself, made one or two fruitless efforts to get clear, and then paused, collected his thoughts, and, in a few mournful words, acknowledged his inability, asked their pardon, and, under the farewell applause of the house, was led off the stage, for ever.

As an actor, he was without trick; his enunciation was clear, in every syllable. Taken aa a whole, he probably excelled every actor who has ever played Shylock, say his biographers; but I remember Edmund Kean, and make that exception. He was not a great tragedian, nor a good light comedian, but in comedy and farce, where rough energy is required, and in parts resembling

Shylock, in their earnest malignity, he was paramount. He could not say of a King, as Quin could, "I taught the boy to speak;" but he gave instruction in elocution to Wedderburne, who was afterwards Chancellor. Boswell himself purified his accent by taking lessons from Love, the actor Macklin was very impatient with mediocrity, but very careful with the intelligent. Easily moved to anger, his pupils and, indeed, many others stood in awe of him; but he was honourable, generous, and humane; convivial, frank, and not more free in his style than his contemporaries; but naturally irascible, and naturally forgiving. "I only know of two actors," he said to Charles Mathews, "who had what an actor requires above all other qualities,—discrimination. Charles Macklin was one; I do not remember the other." "I called on old Macklin," says Boswell, in a letter to Temple, in April, 1791, "the comedian, whom I found with a mind active and cheerful, in his ninety-second or ninety-third year. I could not but wonder, while he related theatrical stories *sixty years old*, and gave me an animated sketch of another comedy in five acts, which he has now finished, and will come out next year."

When Macklin left the stage, his second wife, the widow of a Dublin hosier, and a worthy woman, looked their fortune in the face. It consisted of £60 in ready money, and an annuity of £10. Friends were ready, but the proud old actor was not made to be wounded in his pride; he was made, in a measure, to help himself. His two pieces, "Love à la Mode," and the "Man of the World," were published by subscription. To this subscription, Dora Jordan gave ten pounds, and promised the same annually. With nearly £1,600 realized thereby, an annuity was purchased of £200 for Macklin's life, and £75 for his wife, in case of her survival. And this annuity he enjoyed till the 11th of July, 1797, when the descendant of the royal M'Laughlins died, after a theatrical life (not reckoning the strolling period) of sixty-four years.

Boaden thought Cooke's Sir Pertinax noisy, compared with Macklin's. "He talked of *booing*, but it was evident he took a credit for suppleness that was not in him. Macklin could inveigle as well as subdue; and modulated his voice almost to his last year, with amazing skill." In his old days, he was often to be seen among the audience. When he entered the pit, however crowded it might be, way was always made for him to his accustomed seat, the centre of the row next to the orchestra.

Macklin was an acute inquirer into meaning; and always rendered his conceptions with force and beauty. In reading Milton's lines,

> "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that FOR-BID-DEN tree—whose mortal taste
> Brought DEATH into the world, and ALL our woe,"

the first word in capitals was uttered with an awful regret, the suitable forerunner, says Boaden, "to the great amiss" which follows.

Macklin's chief objection to Garrick was directed against his reckless abundance of action and gesture; all trick, start, and statuesque attitude, were to him subjects of scorn. He finely derided the Hamlets who were violently horrified and surprised, instead of solemnly awed, on first seeing the Ghost. "Recollect, sir," he would say, "Hamlet *came* there to *see* his father's spirit." He died, as he had lived, under the very shadow of the theatre, as all actors had once been accustomed to do. Then came a change. "We are all now looking out for high ground, squares, and genteel neighbourhoods, no matter how far distant from the theatres; as if local reflection could give rhythm to the profession, or genteel neighbourhoods instantaneously produce good manners." Such was Macklin's view.

There was great antagonism between Quin and Macklin; but the latter could not compete with the former in wit, though he sometimes equalled him in sarcasm. Macklin's sarcasms were always brightened and pointed by wit. A clergyman told him that a tradesman had called him a liar, and that he had rejoined, "A lie, sir, is one of the things that I dare not commit." "And why, Doctor," retorted Macklin, "did you give the fellow so mean an opinion of your courage?"

Macklin's character has been described in exactly opposite colours, according to the bias of friend or foe who affords the description. He is angel or fiend, rough or tender, monster, honest man or knave,—and so forth; but he was, of course, neither so bad as his foes nor so bright as his friends made him out to be. Of characters which he played originally (and those were few), he rendered none celebrated, except Sir Archy, Sir Pertinax, and Murrough O'Doherty, in pieces of which he was the author. His other principal characters were Iago, Sir Francis Wronghead, Trappanti, Lovegold, Scrub, Peachem, Polonius, and some others in pieces now not familiar to us.

That Macklin was a "hard actor" there is no doubt; Churchill allows him no excellence, and says he was affected, constrained, "dealt in half-formed sounds," and violated nature; but "Cits and grave divines his praise proclaimed," and Macklin had a large number of admiring friends. In his private life, he had to bear many sorrows, and he bore them generally well, but one, in particular, with the silent anguish of a father who sees his son sinking fast to destruction, and glorying in the way which he is going. This wayward son died April 11th, 1790, after a long illness of ten years, during which he could take no food but by suction.

Ten years before Macklin died he lost his daughter. Miss Macklin was a pretty and modest person; respectable alike on and off the stage; artificially trained, but highly accomplished. Macklin had every reason to be proud of her, for everybody loved her for her gentleness and goodness. In 1742, she played childish parts, and after 1750, those of the highest walk in tragedy and comedy, but against competition which was too strong for her. She was the original Irene, in "Barbarossa," and Clarissa, in "Lionel and Clarissa," and was very fond of acting parts in which the lady had to assume male attire. This fondness was the cause, in some measure, of her death; it led to her buckling her garter so tightly that a dangerous tumour formed on the inner part of the leg, near the knee. From motives of delicacy she would not allow a leg which she had liberally exhibited on the stage, to be examined by her own doctor! Ultimately, a severe operation became necessary. Miss Macklin bore it with courage, but it compelled her to leave the stage, and her strength gradually failing, she died in 1787, at the age of forty-eight, and I wish she had left some portion of her fortune to her celebrated but impoverished father.

CHAPTER XLI.

A BEVY OF LADIES;—BUT CHIEFLY MRS. BELLAMY, MISS FARREN, MRS. ABINGTON, AND "PERDITA."

First among the great actresses who passed away from the stage during the latter portion of the last century, were Mrs. Yates and George Anne Bellamy. The former could not compete with Mrs. Cibber, till that lady's illness caused Mandane ("Orphan of China") to be given to Mrs. Yates, who, by her careful acting, at once acquired a first-rate reputation. In the classical heroines of the dull old classical tragedies of the last century, she was wonderfully effective, and her Medea was so peculiarly her own, that Mrs Siddons never disturbed the public memory of it, by acting the part. Mrs. Yates recited beautifully, was always dignified, but seems to have wanted variety of expression. With a haughty mien, and a powerful voice, she was well suited to the strong-minded heroines of tragedy; but the more tender ladies, Desdemona or Monimia, she could not compass. To the pride and violence of Calista she was equal, but in pathos she was wanting. Her comedy (save her Violante) was as poor as that of Mrs. Siddons; her Jane Shore as good; her Medea, unapproachable. I suspect she was a little haughty; for impudent Weston says in his will: "To Mrs. Yates I leave all my humility!" Her *scorn* was never equalled but by Mrs. Siddons, and it would be difficult to determine which lady had the most lofty majesty. In passion, Mrs. Yates swept the stage as with a tempest; yet she was always under control. For instance, in Lady Constance, after wildly screaming,

> "I will not keep this form upon my head,
> When there is much disorder in my wit,"

she did not cast to the ground the thin cap which surmounted her

head-dress, but quietly took it from her head, and placed it on the right side of the circumference of her hoop! Mrs. Yates died in 1787.

George Anne Bellamy is unfortunate in having a story, which honest women seldom have. Mount Sion, at Tunbridge Wells, was the property of her mother, a Quaker farmer's daughter, named Seal, who, on *her* mother falling into distress, was taken by Mrs. Gregory, the sister of the Duke of Marlborough, to be educated. Miss Seal was placed in an academy in Queen's Square, Westminster, so dull a locality, that the rascally Lord Tyrawley had no difficulty in persuading her to run away from it, to his apartments, in Somerset House. When my lord wanted a little change, he left Miss Seal with her infant son, and crossed to Ireland to make an offer to the daughter of the Earl of Blessington. She was ugly, (he wrote to Miss Seal), but had money; and when he got possession of both, he would leave the first, and bring the latter with renewed love, to share with Miss Seal! This lady was so particularly touched by this letter, that she sent it to the earl, who forbade his daughter to marry my lord, but found they were married already! Tyrawley hoped thus to secure Lady Mary Stewart's fortune; but discovering she had none at her disposal, he naturally felt he had been deceived, and turned his wife off to her relations! Having gone through this amount of villany, King George thought he was qualified to represent him at Lisbon, and thither Lord Tyrawley proceeded accordingly. He would have taken Miss Seal with him, but she preferred to go on the stage. Ultimately she *did* consent to go; and was received with open arms; but she was so annoyed by the discovery of a swarthy rival, that she listened to the wooing of a Captain Bellamy, married him, and (in 1731) presented him with a daughter with such promptitude, that the modest captain ran away from so clever a woman, and never saw her afterwards.

Lord Tyrawley, proud of the implied compliment, acknowledged the little George Anne Bellamy, born on St. George's day, 1731, as his daughter. He exhibited the greatest care in her education. He kept her at a Boulogne convent from her fifth to her eighth year, and then brought her up at his house at Bexley, amid noble young scamps, whose society was quite as useful to her as if she had been at a "finishing" school. Lord Tyrawley having perfected himself in the further study of demi-rippism, went as the representative of England to Russia, leaving an allowance for his daughter, which so warmed up her mother's affections for her,

that she induced George Anne to live with her, and the mother hoped that her annuity would do so too, but my lord, having different ideas, stopped the annuity, and did not care to recover his daughter. The two women were destitute; but the younger one was rarely beautiful, had certain gifts, and, of course, the managers heard of her. She had played Miss Prue for Bridgewater's benefit, in 1742, and gave promise. In 1744 Rich overheard her as she was playing "Othello" with his daughters, in his drawing-room; and Garrick acted Orestes to her Andromache, at another private performance; and was delighted with her. Rich put her in training, and announced her for Monimia. Quin was angry at having to play Chamont to "such a child;" but the little thing manifested such tenderness and ability, that he confessed she was charming. Later, he gave her admirable counsel, which she did not heed. A noble lord carried her off in his coach to a house at the corner of North Audley Street, which looked over the dull Oxford Road to the desolate fields beyond. Much scandal ensued; amid which Miss Bellamy's half-brother appeared, shook his sister as a pert baggage, and sorely mauled my lord. Then Miss Bellamy went among some Quaker relations who had never previously seen her, and charmed them so by her soft, and winning Quakerish ways, that they would have made an idol of her, but a discovery that she was an actress brought this phase of her life to an end, and it was followed by a triumphant season on the Dublin stage, from 1745 to 1747, where she made such a sensation, reigned so like a queen, and was altogether so irresistible and rich, that Lord Tyrawley's family acknowledged her! My lord himself became reconciled to her, through old Quin, and would have spent her income for her after she was re-engaged at Covent Garden, in 1748, if she would only have married his friend, old Crump. Rather than do that, and beset as she was, by lovers, though protected like a daughter, by Quin, she let Mr. Metham carry her off from Covent Garden, dressed as she was to play Lady Fanciful, to live with, quarrel with, and refuse to wed with him.

What with the loves, caprices, charms, extravagances, faro-table keeping, and sufferings of Mrs. Bellamy, she excited the wonder, pity, and contempt of the town, for thirty years. The Mr. Metham, she might have married, she would not: sordid Calcraft (the contractor), and Digges, whom she would have, and the last of whom she thought she *had* married, she could not; for both had wives living. But fashion thought no ill of her, and

male and female aristocrats stood sponsors to her children. She was a syren who went down to ruin with each victim; but she rose from the wreck more exquisitely seductive and terribly fascinating than ever. Meanwhile, she kept a position on the stage, in the very front rank, disputing pre-eminence with the best there, and achieving it in some things; for this perilous charmer was unequalled in her day for the expression of unbounded and rapturous love. Her looks glowing with the passion to which she gave expression, doubled the effect; and whether she gazed at a lover or rested her head on the bosom of her lord, nothing more tender and subduing was ever seen. She was so beautiful, had eyes of such soft and loving blue, was so extraordinarily fair, and was altogether so irresistible a sorceress, that Mrs. Bellamy was universally loved as a charming creature, and admired as an excellent actress; and when she played some poor lady distraught through affection, the stoutest hearts under embroidered or broadcloth waistcoats, crumbled away, often into inconceivable mountains of gold-dust.

She laughed, and scattered as fast as they piled it, and in the gorgeous extravagance of her life began to lose her powers as an actress. She had once almost shared the throne assumed by Mrs. Cibber, but she wanted the sustained zeal and anxious study of that lady, and cared not, as Mrs. Cibber did, for one quiet abiding home, by whomsoever shared, but sighed for change, had it, and suffered for it. She excelled in Shakspeare's heroines, and, among her advantages over Mrs. Cibber, in Juliet, must be reckoned her youth. At her Belvidera, Murray exclaimed, "I came to admire Garrick, and I go away enchanted with Bellamy." At her Cordelia, George II. only noticed her "prodigious hoop."

From reigning it like a queen on and off the stage,—imperious and lovely, and betraying everywhere,—to the figure of a poor, bailiff-persecuted, famishing wretch, stealing down the muddy steps of Old Westminster Bridge to drown herself in the Thames, how wide are the extremes! But in both positions we find the original Volumnia of Thomson, the Erixine of Dr. Young, and the Cleone, to whom Dodsley owed the success of his heart-rending tragedy. To the last, she was as unfortunate as she had been reckless. Two old lovers, one of whom was Woodward, bequeathed legacies to her, which she never received. Those sums seemed as life to her; but, in the days of her pride and her power, and wicked but transcendent beauty, she would have scorned them as mere pin-money; and so she grew acquainted with gaunt

misery, till some friends, weary, perhaps, of sustaining the burthen she imposed on them, induced the managers to give her a farewell benefit, in 1784, on which occasion Mrs Yates returned to the stage to play for her the Duchess, in "Braganza." More than forty years before, the brilliant little sylph, Miss Bellamy, had floated on to the same Covent Garden stage, confident in both intellectual and material charms. Now, the middle-aged woman, still older through fierce impatience at her fall, through want, misery, hopelessness, everything but remorse, had not nerve enough to go on and utter a few words of farewell. These were spoken for her by Miss Farren, before the curtain, which ascended at the words,

> "But see, oppress'd with gratitude and tears,
> To pay her duteous tribute, she appears;"

and discovered the once beautiful and happy syren, a terrified, old-looking woman, lying, powerless to rise, in an arm-chair. But the whole house—some out of respect for the erst charmer, others out of curiosity to behold a woman of such fame, rose to greet her. George Anne, urged by Miss Catley, bent forward, and then, she whose conversational powers were allowed by Quin and Garrick to be superior to Margaret Woffington's, murmured a few indistinct words, and, falling back again, the curtain descended, for the last time, between the public and the Fallen Angel of the stage. Her best quality was in her charity. In the days of her fortune, she gave £900 towards better clothing for our troops in Germany; and grateful sentinels in the Park saluted the "angel" as she passed.

We come next to Miss Farren; the first glimpse to be caught of whom is as picturesque as can well be imagined. Her father, once a Cork surgeon, but now manager of a strolling company, is in the lock-up of the town of Salisbury; he fell into durance through an unconscious infringement of the borough law. The story is told, at length, in my *Knights and their Days*. On a wintry morning, a little girl carries him a bowl of hot milk, for breakfast, and she is helped over the ice to the lock-up window, by a sympathising lad. The nymph is Miss Farren, afterwards Countess of Derby; the boy is the very happy beginning of Chief Justice Burroughs. This incident occurred in 1769. Three years later, Elizabeth was playing Columbine at Wakefield. She could sing as well as she could dance, gracefully; and, for very

love of the beautiful girl, Younger brought her out, at Liverpool, where her maternal grandfather had been a brewer of repute and good fortune, and where his grand-daughter proved such a Rosetta, that more than half the young fellows were more deeply in love with her than the paternal Younger himself. After five years' training, the radiant girl, glowing with beauty and intelligence, first charmed a London audience, on June the 9th, 1777, by appearing at the Haymarket, as Miss Hardcastle. In that first year of London probation, her Miss Hardcastle was a great success; the town was ecstatic at that and her Maria, in the "Citizen," was rapt at her Rosetta, rendered hilarious by her Miss Tittup, and rarely charmed by her playfulness and dignity, as Rosara (Rosina), in the "Barber of Seville." In the following year, the success of her Lady Townly transferred her to Drury Lane, where she divided the principal parts with Miss Walpole, Miss P. Hopkins (Mrs. Kemble, subsequently), and Perdita Robinson; and not one of the four beauties was twenty years of age!

For about a score of years she maintained a pre-eminence which she did not, however, attain all at once, or without a struggle; her most powerful and graceful opponent, being Mrs. Abington. Her early days had been of such stern and humble aspect, such a strolling and starving with her stage-mad and improvident father, that an anonymous biographer says of her: "The early parts of the history of many eminent ladies on the stage must be extremely disagreeable to them in the recital; and to none we apprehend, more than to Miss Farren, who, from the lowest histrionic sphere, has raised herself to the most elevated." During the years above-named, she played principally at Drury Lane and the Haymarket, and chiefly the parts of fine ladies, for which she seemed born; though she attempted tragedy, now and then; and assumed low comedy characters, occasionally; but her natural elegance, her tall and delicate figure, her beautiful expression, her superbly modulated voice, her clear and refined pronunciation, made of her fine lady a perfect charm; not merely the Lady Betty Modish, and similar personages, but the sentimental Indianas and Cecilias. Walpole says, that she was the most perfect actress he had ever seen. Adolphus praises "the irresistible graces of her address and manner, the polished beauties of her action and gait, and all the indescribable little charms which give fascination to the woman of birth and fashion," as among the excellences which secured a triumph for Bur-

goyne's "Heiress." In that play she acted Lady Emily Gayville; and Adolphus again says of her:—"Whether high and honourable sentiments, burning and virtuous sensibility, sincere and uncontrollable affection; animated, though sportive reprehension; elegant persiflage, or arch and pointed satire were the aim of the author, Miss Farren amply filled out his thought, and, by her exquisite representation, made it, even when faint and feeble in itself, striking and forcible." In fewer words, she had feeling, judgment, grace, and discretion. During her stage career she was the manageress of the private theatricals at the Duke of Richmond's, the most exclusive of dramatic entertainments. She moved in "the best society." Charles James Fox is said to have been attached to her; but long before she withdrew from the stage it was printed, that when "*one* certain event should happen, a Countess's coronet would fall on her brow." This one event, waited for during a score of years, was the death of the Countess of Derby. To the Duchess of Leinster, who knew something of Miss Farren's family in Ireland, the actress was indebted for introductions to Lady Ailesbury, Mrs. Damer, and others, through whom Miss Farren became acquainted with the Earl of Derby, who was himself a clever actor, in private theatricals. A Platonic affection, at least, was soon established. Walpole writing, in 1791, to the Miss Berrys, says: "I have had no letter from you these ten days, though the east wind has been as constant as Lord Derby," not to his wife, whom he had married in 1774, but to Miss Farren, who first came to London three years later. Miss Wynne, in her *Diary of a Lady of Quality*, says she could not recollect Miss Farren as an excellent actress, but only as one of never-failing elegance and ease. "I recollect (not the admirable acting in the famous screen-scene, but) the circumstance of seeing Lord Derby leaving his private-box to creep to her behind the screen, and of course we all looked with impatience for the discovery, hoping the screen would fall a little too soon, and show to the audience Lord Derby as well as Lady Teazle."

On the 14th of March, 1797, the long-tarrying Countess departed this life; on the 8th of April following, Miss Farren took final leave of the stage, in Lady Teazle. After the play, Wroughton led her forward, and spoke a few farewell words for her, at the end of which she gracefully curtseyed to all parts of the house, and went home, and was married to the Earl, on the May Day of the year in which he had lost his first wife! Six

weeks 'twixt death and bridal! and yet we hear that Miss Farren's greatest charm consisted in her "delicate, genuine, impressive sensibility, which reached the heart by a process no less certain than that by which her other powers effected their impression on their fancy and judgment. This fair creature lived to be a great snuff-taker, and was one of the best customers of Fribourg and Treyer, in the Haymarket. Of the three children of the marriage, only one survived, Mary, born in 1801, and married, twenty years afterwards, to the Earl of Wilton. Through her, the blood of an actress once more mingles with that of the peerage.

But the loss which the stage felt as severely as it did that of Miss Farren, was, in 1798, in the person of a lady, with whom we first become acquainted as a vivacious and intelligent little girl selling flowers in St. James's Park. She is known as "Nosegay Fan." Her father, a soldier in the Guards, mends shoes, when off duty, in Windmill Street, Haymarket, and her brother waters the horses of the Hampstead stage, at the corner of Hanway Yard. Who would suppose that this little Fanny Barton, who sells moss-roses, would one day set the fashions to all the fine ladies in the three kingdoms; that Horace Walpole would welcome her more warmly to Strawberry Hill than an ordinary princess, and that "Nosegay Fan" would be the original and never-equalled Lady Teazle? Humble, however, as the position of the flower girl is, she comes of the Bartons of Derbyshire, and not longer ago than the accession of King William, sons of that family held honourable position in the church, the army, and in government offices. Fanny Barton ran on errands for a French milliner, and occasionally encountered Baddeley, when the latter was apprenticed to a confectioner, and was not dreaming of the Twelfth Cake he was to bequeath to the actors of Drury Lane. Then ensued some passages in her life that remind one of the experiences of Nell Gwyn. Fanny, in one way or another, made her way in the world, and, for the sake of a smile, lovers courted ruin. This brilliant, though not edifying, career did not last long. Among the many friends she had acquired was Theophilus Cibber, who had just procured a licence to open the theatre in the Haymarket. He had marked the capabilities of the "vivacious" Fanny, and he tempted her to appear under his management, as *Miranda*, in the "Busy Body," to his Marplot. This was on the 21st of August, 1755, when the debutante was only seventeen years of age. She immediately excited attention as an actress of

extraordinary promise; and, in the short summer season she exhibited her versatility by playing Miss Jenny, in the "Provoked Husband;" Desdemona, Sylvia, in the "Recruiting Officer," and finally enchanted her audience as Prince Prettyman, in the "Rehearsal."

From the Haymarket this clever girl went to Bath and fascinated King, the manager; thence to Richmond, where Lacey, the manager, fell equally in love with her, and engaged her for Drury Lane (1756-7), here, however, the presence, success, and claims of Miss Pritchard, Miss Macklin, and Mrs. Clive, kept her out of the line of characters for which she was especially qualified. She was, moreover, ill-educated, and she forthwith placed herself under tuition. Fanny took for music-master, Mr. Abington, who, of course, became desperately in love with, and marrried, his pupil. The young couple established a splendid home in the then fashionable quarter, St. Martin's Lane; but soon after, the convenient Apollo disappears, and even the musical dictionaries fail to tell us of the being and whereabout of a man whose wife made his name famous.

After four seasons at Drury, she went on a triumphant career to Dublin. There she acquired all she had hitherto lacked, and when, in the season of 1765-66, she re-appeared at Drury Lane, as Cherry, upon terms granted by Garrick, which were no longer considered extravagant, so conspicuous was her talent, the play-going world was in a fever of delight. Her career, from 1755 to 1798, lasted forty-three years, and though Time touched her person, it never weakened her talent. Critics praise her elegant form, her graceful address, the animation and expression of her looks, her quick intelligence, her perfect taste. Expression served her more than beauty, and her voice, once hardly better than Peg Woffington's, became perfectly musical by her power of modulation. Every word was pronounced with a clearness that made her audible in the remotest parts of the theatre, and this was a charm of itself in such parts as Beatrice, and Lady Teazle, where "every word stabbed," as King remarked. In short, she was one of the most natural, easy, impressive, and enchanting actresses that ever appeared on the stage. Reynolds took her for his Comic Muse, and it is worth a pilgrimage to Knowle Park to look on that wonderful impersonation, and realize something of the grace and perfection of Mrs. Abington. In 1771, Walpole wrote to her, "I do impartial justice to your merit, and fairly allow it not only equal to any actress I have seen, but

believe the present age will not be in the wrong if they hereafter prefer it to those they may live to see." On one occasion, he describes her, in Lady Teazle, as "equal to the first of her profession." She "seemed the very person," an "admiration of Mrs. Abington's genius made him long desire the honour of her acquaintance." He goes to sup with her, hoping "that Mrs. Clive will not hear of it;" and he throws Strawberry open to her, and as many friends as she chooses to bring with her. When the fever of his enthusiasm had somewhat abated, and he remembered the "Nosegay Fan" of early days, his admiration was more discriminating. Mrs. Abington, then, "can never go beyond Lady Teazle, which is a second-rate character, and that rank of women are always aping women of fashion without arriving at the style." Out of the line of the affected fine lady, says Lady G. Spencer, "Mrs. Abington should never go. In that she succeeds, because it is not unnatural to her." This criticism is just, for Lady Teazle is a *parvenue*. That "fine lady," by accident and not by birth, Mrs. Abington could play admirably; better than she could Lady Modish, who was a lady by birth and education. But even in the latter character she is described as having been the accomplished and well-bred woman of fashion. Her intercourse with ladies of rank, an intimacy which made her somewhat vain, was of use to her in such impersonations; but she was not received so unreservedly as Mrs. Oldfield, for many remembered her early wild course, and saw no compensation for it in the later and better regulated life. She turned such schooling as she could obtain in drawing-rooms to the best account; but Mrs. Oldfield, in the University of Fashion, took first-class honours.

Coquettes, chamber-maids, hoydens, country girls, and the women of the Lady Teazle, Lady Fanciful, and Lady Racket cast, she played without fear of a rival. Her chamber-maids seem to have been over-dressed, and this superfluity attended some of her other characters, in which she was as much beplumed as the helmet in the *Castle of Otranto*. For more than a quarter of a century, her Widow Belmour, in the "Way to Keep Him," was a never-failing delight to the public. Murphy says, that her graces of action gave to this part brilliancy, and even novelty, every time she repeated it. Like other clever players, she committed a fault,—her's was in acting Scrub, for a wager,—at her benefit, in 1786. She acted the part with her hair dressed for Lady Racket, which she played in the after-piece! She figured in the private theatricals, at Brandenburgh House, of the Margra-

vine of Anspach. In one of the plays represented,—the "Provoked Wife," the piece was cut down, in order that no female character should have equal prominence with that of Lady Brute, played by the Margravine herself; but Mrs. Abington asserted her professional right, and played her once-famous scene of Lady Fanciful, straight through, to the united delight of herself and audience.

In her later years she lost her old grace and fine figure; and she, who had snatched the mantle from Kitty Clive, found it taken from her, in her turn, by Miss Farren, whom, however, she survived on the stage. From 1798 to 1815, Mrs. Abington lived in retirement, active only in works of charity; and when she died in the latter year, few remembered in the deceased wealthy lady, the vivacious "Nosegay Fan," of three quarters of a century before.

There remains to be noticed one who, in the annals of the stage, appears like a brief but charming episode, a fair promise, hastily made, and not realised; an actress of whom Garrick augured well, and whom he gave to the stage, from which she was snatched by a prince. Miss Darby was a native of Bristol, and a pupil of Hannah More. She was the heiress of a fair fortune, which her philanthropic father dissipated, in attempts to civilise the Esquimaux Indians. Having beggared his wife and child, the man, with a heart for all mankind, but not for his home, left the latter; and the mother, then, was supported by what Miss Darby could earn as a governess. What she could spare, she devoted to acquiring "the usual accomplishments." Among the latter, was dancing; and her master introduced her to Garrick. After some training, she recited Cordelia, like a clever child, as she was; and then disappeared. She was not sixteen when she married Mr. Robinson, a young man of good fortune, apprenticed to the law. The happy couple ran through their fortune in splendid haste; and Mrs. Robinson spent more than a year with him in prison. Misery drove her again to Garrick, who, though now withdrawn from the stage, rehearsed Romeo to her Juliet; and sat in the orchestra on the night of the 10th of December, 1776, when she played the latter part to the Romeo of Brereton. She was then only eighteen; and her success was all that could be expected from her talent, beauty, and a voice which reminded Garrick of his darling Mrs. Cibber. Thus commenced the brief stage career which ended in May, 1780, with the "Winter's Tale," and her own farce, the "Miniature Picture," on which occasion, she played

Perdita and Eliza Camply. In the interval, she had acted the tender or proudly loving ladies in tragedy, and the refined and sprightly nymphs in comedy. Since Mrs. Woffington and the first blush of Mrs. Bellamy, such peculiar grace and charms had not been seen on the stage. The critics extolled both, the fine gentlemen besieged her with billets-doux, and the artists protested that they had never beheld better taste than her's in costume. On the 3rd of December, 1779, their Majesties' servants played, by command, at Drury Lane, the "Winter's Tale," for the sixth time. The King, Queen, and royal family, were in their box, when Perdita (Mrs. Robinson) entered the green room, dressed more exquisitely and looking more bewitching than ever. "You will make a conquest of the Prince, to-night," said Smith, laughingly; "I never saw you look so handsome as you do now!" He was a true prophet. The Prince was subdued by her beauty, and subsequently wrote letters to her, which were signed "Florizel," and were carried by no less noble a go between than the Earl of Essex This messenger of love wooed her for the Prince, while he adored her himself,—at least he said so! He gave her the Prince's portrait, and a heart, *in paper*, symbol of the worth and tenacity of the Prince's. On this token was a double motto, in French, for the air of the thing: "Je ne change qu'en mourant;" and in English, for the emphasis of it: "Unalterable to my Perdita through life."

This young creature's husband was living in profligacy on her salary, which he received at the treasury; and she was wooed by a young Prince, with a magic of wooing which, she said, she should never forget. The first step she made toward the latter was, by meeting him in a boat, moored off Kew. The second, was by meeting him by moonlight, in Kew Gardens. But then, the "Bishop of Osnaburgh" was present! And the lady herself was a furbelowed Egeria to a powdered Numa. "During many months of confidential correspondence," she says, "I always offered his royal highness the best advice in my power." Deathless was to be the young Prince's love, and his munificence was to be equal to his truth. In proof of the latter, he gave her a bond for £20,000, to be paid to her on his coming of age. In a few months he attained his majority, refused to pay the money, and made no secret to the lady of his deathless love having died out. He passed her in the park, affecting not to know her; but the spirited young woman flung a remark at him that ought to have made him blush, had he been to that manner born. However,

she was not altogether abandoned. The patriotic Whig statesman, Charles Fox, obtained for the Prince's cast-off favourite an annuity of £300,—out of the pockets of a tax-paying people! Perdita would fain have returned to the stage, but her friends dissuaded her. No one could tell how a moral people would receive the abandoned of "Florizel!" So, restless, she dwelt, now here, now there; now in France, where Marie Antoinette gave a purse, knitted by her luckless fingers, to "la belle Anglaise;" now in Brighton, where also resided, in the brightest of her beauty and the highest of her splendour, Mrs. Fitzherbert; the married Polly and the royal Macheath's neglected Lucy! Perdita was not idle; she wrote poems and novels: the former, tender in sentiment and expression; the latter, not without power and good sense. She had undertaken to supply the *Morning Post*, with poetry, when she died, after cruel suffering, in the last year of the last century (1800):—the last of the pupils of David Garrick.

There was good in this hapless creature. Throughout life, she was the loving and helping child of her mother; the loving and helping mother of her child, for both of whom she laboured ungrudgingly, to the last. Hannah More, herself, would not harshly construe the conduct of her pupil. "I make the greatest allowance for inexperience and novel passions," was the comment of Horace Walpole. "Poor Perdita!" said Mrs. Siddons, "I pity her from my very heart!"

She fell into bad hands, beginning with those of her father. In her husband's, she was still less cared for, though she spent nearly a year with him in a sponging-house, to leave which she was importuned by worthless peers and equally worthless commoners. There was a public admiration for her which scarcely any other actress so practically experienced. Thus, on the night in 1776, when the "Trip to Scarborough" was undergoing temporary condemnation, Mrs. Yates, yielding to the storm, suddenly withdrew, and left Mrs. Robinson, as Amanda, standing alone on the stage, where she was so bewildered by the continued hissing, that the Duke of Cumberland stood up in his box, requested her not to be alarmed, and cheered her by calling out, "It is not you, but the piece, they are hissing."

She had good taste, and manifested it in an attention to costume, when propriety therein was not much cared for. She describes the outward presentment of her Statira ("Alexander the Great"), by saying: "My dress was white and blue, made after the Persian costume; and, though it was then singular on the stage,

I wore neither a hoop nor powder. My feet were bound with sandals, richly ornamented; and the whole dress was picturesque and characteristic."

Between this period and the time when she lay stricken by paralysis, the interval was not long; and then the forsaken creature, if vanity abided with her, was obliged to content herself with reminiscences of the past,—when she was the Laura Maria of Della Crusca, and when Merry declared that future poets and ages would join, "to pour in Laura's praise, their melodies divine." During that same time, Peter Pindar called her—"*The* nymph of my heart;" Burgoyne pronounced her, "perfect as woman and artist;" Tickle proclaimed her, "the British Sappho;" John Taylor hailed her, "Pensive songstress;" Boaden recorded her, "mentally perfect;" the Hon. John St. John asserted that "Nature had formed her, queen of song," Kerr Porter saluted her in thundering heroics; and two theatrical parsons, Will Tasker and Paul Columbine, flung heaps of flowers at her feet, with the zeal of heathen priests before an incarnation of Flora.

She was buried in old Windsor Church-yard, but to her *shrine* at Englefield Green, where she died, crowds of lords and ladies went, till she was forgotten in newer sensations.

CHAPTER XLII.

A GROUP OF GENTLEMEN.

The players of the Garrick period and the years immediately succeeding it, followed in due time their great master. Of these, Samuel Reddish first appeared in London, at Drury Lane, in September, 1767, as Lord Townly, to Mrs. Abington's "My Lady." His career in London lasted twelve years. Within those dozen years, Sam Reddish played an infinite variety of characters, from tragedy to farce. He was easy and spirited; he spoke well in mere declamatory parts, but, for want of feeling and variety in the play of his features, failed in parts of passion. His most attractive character was Edgar, in "King Lear;" Posthumus stood next.

When Churchill said, "With transient gleam of grace, Hart sweeps along," he was praising the lady whom Reddish married soon after he came to London, and who lost the "transient gleam," in growing fat. His second wife was a woman of very different quality,—a respectable, but impoverished, widow, keeping school in Mary-le-bone, named Canning, whose first husband (a gentleman who had offended his friends by marrying her) had, in 1767, published a translation of the first book of Polignac's *Anti-Lucretius*. The widow Canning's son, George, subsequently became prime minister of England, "for giving birth to whom," says Genest, "she was in due time rewarded with a handsome pension," which she enjoyed as Mrs. Hunn, down to 1827. Reddish met with her on the stage of Drury Lane, where the lady made her first public appearance (6th of November, 1773) in "Jane Shore," Reddish playing her husband; while Garrick acted Hastings, at the request of several ladies of rank who patronized Mrs. Canning. She subsequently played Perdita to the Florizel of "gentle" Cautherley,—who was said to be a natural son, certainly a well-trained pupil, of Garrick. Her next

part was Mrs. Beverley to Garrick's Beverley; her fourth Octavia (in "All for Love") to the Antony of Reddish, whose wife she became at an unlucky season. As early as the year 1773, Reddish exhibited one symptom of the malady which compelled him, ultimately, to retire, namely the want of memory, which indicates weakness of the brain. He forgot the acting nights in Lent, and made affidavit to that effect, by way of apology. His wife, who was a favourite in the provinces, was ultimately hissed from the stage of Old Drury.

Gradually, Reddish's memory grew more disturbed, till it could no longer be relied on. During the season 1777-8, he was incapable of acting, and was supported by the fund. In the following season, he essayed Hamlet, but it was almost as painful as the Ophelia of poor, mad, Susan Mountfort. Later in the season, in May, 1779, the managers gave him a benefit, when "Cymbeline" was acted, and Reddish was announced for Posthumus. Down to an hour or two before the play began, he thought he was to act Romeo. He could neither be persuaded nor convinced to the contrary, for a long time, and then only to fall into the old delusion. He was so impressed by his idea, that his colleagues, who had striven to keep him to Posthumus, saw him go to the wing, with the expectation that he would look for Benvolio's cue, "Good morrow, cousin!" and would be prepared to answer, "Is the day so young?" With that expectation, they pushed him on the stage,—where the old situation wrought a temporary cure in him. To the welcoming applause he returned a bow of modest respect, his eye lighted up, and he went through the scene with more than his usual ability. But he had no sooner passed the wing than the old delusion returned; he was all Romeo, waiting for and longing to begin the garden-scene. Many were the fears that at his second going on, he would be disturbed. He stood dreamingly waiting at the side, but then Reddish was Posthumus again, and he played to the close with a burst of inspiration and talent, such as he had not shown, even in his best days. His mind, however, was healthy only for the night; fitful seasons there were in which he tried to act in the country; but he soon became diseased again, and, shut up in a mad-house, poor Reddish might be seen on visitors' days at St. Luke's, a sad spectacle, herding among the lunatics in that once popular place of cruel exhibition. Poor Reddish was moved to better air, improved diet, and less plebeian society,—in the Asylum at York. The outside world had been by him long forgotten, and he forgotten by the

world, when he happily died there, not one hour too soon, in the last month of the year 1785. At that time Mrs. Canning's son was at Eton, where he had been placed by a paternal uncle, and where he published the *Microcosm*, 1786-7.

About the same time disappeared from the London stage, Ross, who, like Barton Booth, was a Westminster boy. Ross, like Booth, played Young Bevil with great ability, and, as the Ghost of Banquo, produced almost as much effect as Booth in the Ghost of Hamlet's father. Here, however, all parallel ends. Wanting Booth's industry, Ross never raised himself to Booth's level. With a passion for the stage, and every qualification but industry, he marred his prospects by letting "mere chance conduct him every night," till the town wearied of him. He was on the stage from 1753 to 1788. Such is the record of a player who entirely threw his chance away, by his neglect. Possessing power, he wanted will, and was always looking to others for help. He played George Barnwell with such effect that felonious apprentices were turned from their evil ways; and young men given to philandering with Milwoods and to thoughts of killing their uncles, were frightened into a better state of things. One who was thus rescued used to send, anonymously, ten guineas yearly to Ross, with a suitable acknowledgment on his benefit night, "You have done more good by your acting," said Dr. Barrowby to him, "than many a parson by his preaching" Boswell was chief mourner at Ross's funeral. "Poor Ross," writes Boswell to Temple, "he was an unfortunate man in some respects; but he was a true *bon vivant*, a most social man, and never was without good eating and drinking, and hearty companions. He had school-fellows and friends who stood by him wonderfully." Ross died suddenly, in 1790. He lies in St. James's, Piccadilly.

The next to disappear from our group is Yates (1736-1782), the only actor of his day who had a just notion how to play Shakspeare's fools; he was ever natural, but frequently imperfect; in low comedy, not to be surpassed; in fine gentlemen, he "looked like Tom Errand in Beau Clincher's clothes."

Next passes from the stage to private life, *Gentleman* Smith, son of a city grocer, and one of the few players who have been pupils at Eton. In 1753, as the pupil of Barry, he first appeared as Theodosius. In 1788 he retired, after playing his original character, Charles Surface. If the stage had no greater clown and old man than Yates, it had no more perfect gentleman than Smith. In gay comedy lay his strength, but he was the

most refined of light tragedians, and played Richard with effect even in Garrick's days. Smith was indefatigable in his profession, and proud of his own position in it, congratulating himself on never having had to act in a farce, or sink through a trap. On his retirement, he lived like a country gentleman at Bury St. Edmunds, whence he came in 1798, to play Charles Surface, at sixty-six, with some fat, and legs a little shaky, but with youthful spirit, for the farewell benefit of King.

Then there is Tate Wilkinson, whose reverend father of the Savoy Chapel, Garrick had contributed to transport, by informing against him for illegally performing the ceremony of marriage. Garrick, in return, helped forward the son, an *exotic*, as he said, rather than an actor; but as an imitator never equalled, for he represented not only the voice and manner of other persons, but could put on their features, even those of beautiful women! He played well, but only when he mimicked some other actor throughout the piece.

From 1765 to 1790—beginning at Dublin, and ending at Covent Garden—includes the career of poor Edwin. When young, he played old men; when old, young; and to his humour and ability O'Keefe owed such obligation, that it was said whenever Edwin died, O'Keefe would be d——d! "He was sure of applause, whether he had to utter the humour of Shakspeare, the wit of Congreve or Sheridan, or merely to sing 'Tag rag-merry-derry;'" says Adolphus. Henderson pronounced his bye-play as unequalled. In Sir Hugh Evans, when preparing for the duel, he kept the house in an ecstasy of merriment, without uttering a word. His success, however, was less in old than in new parts written for him. In a revived play, Quick and Parsons could find characters that suited them, but there was seldom one for Edwin.

Among last century actors of note was West Digges, proud of the blood of the Delawares, not less than of being Home's original Norval, and of being called the "Gentleman Actor." He was a gentleman by birth Elizabeth, sister of the first Earl of Delaware, married, 1724, Thomas Digges, of Chilham Castle, Kent, Esq., and the player was their son. Lee Lewes was a sort of counterfeit Woodward, who struggled and failed. In contrast with this erst deputy-postman, passes grave and dignified Bensley, whose great part was Eustace de St. Pierre, in Colman's "Siege of Calais," in which he was remarkable for his mingling of churlish humour with the most tender sympathy. About the

same time that Bensley left the stage to become barrack-master at Knightsbridge, Moody retired from the public scene. The best actor of Irishmen of his time, he was ashamed of being taken for one. His real name was Cochrane: he was a native of Cork, where he had been apprenticed to his father, a hairdresser; but he chose to call himself Moody, and to declare that he was not born in Cork, but somewhere near Clare Market. In Jamaica, he played leading tragic characters, for several years. He made no effect at Covent Garden, till he was cast for Captain O'Cutter, in Colman's "Jealous Wife." His fine humour and correct judgment gained for him the universal applause; but the crown of his reputation was set by his representation of Major O'Flaherty, for which he reaped as golden a harvest of fame as the author did by his piece. Indeed, he was the first who brought the stage Irishman into repute, and rendered the character one of a distinct line whereby a performer might acquire reputation. Moody had no rival till Johnstone appeared in 1784, without any idea of rivalry, for the latter began his career as an operatic singer.

In 1796, another of the players, who dated from the Garrick days, passed away—little Dodd. Like Moody and the Kembles, he had a sire who was connected with hair-dressing, but who gave his boy a very excellent education. At a London school, he played Davus, in the "Andria," to such purpose, that at sixteen, he was off to Sheffield, where he commenced his histrionic course as Roderigo, in "Othello." He served the hard apprenticeship of itinerancy, and then so distinguished himself on the Bath stage, by his comic acting, although he had been engaged for general business, that Garrick beckoned him up to London, and by consigning to him the part of Faddle, in the "Foundling," showed that he took perfect measure of his ability. From that year 1765 to 1796, Dodd was the darling of the public, in his peculiar line. For fops of the old school, or old men who would pass for young fops, for simpletons and cunning knaves, for wearing a now obsolete modish costume, for "the nice conduct of a clouded cane," for carrying a snuff-box, and, above all, for his unsurpassable style of taking a pinch, Dodd was really a wonderful actor. He wore his sword, cocked or carried his hat, displayed his ruffle, and moved about in a poising, tottering, sort of way, which was all his own, and always perfect. His Abel Drugger stood next to Garrick's; and his Sir Andrew Aguecheek was as truly Shakspearian as the author could have desired. Master Slender, Master Stephen, Watty Cockney, were among

the parts which were said to die with him. Of Dodd dying, no one dreamt till it was done. I can only think of him as going forward on the tips of his toes, mincingly, hat in one hand, cane in the other, a smile on his face, and with a bow to the Summoner, sinking contentedly back on a convenient sofa,—one little sigh perhaps of weariness, and little, fresh, cheery, gentleman-like Dodd is gone, sir!

Baddeley, who was a cook and confectioner, and who travelled in some humble capacity abroad, where he learnt French, and the way to play French valets, was the original Canton, and he was dressed for Moses, when, in 1794, he was taken ill, and shortly after expired. Before dying, he thought of his old comrades, and of his successors, in his own good-natured way. He bequeathed his cottage at Moulsey to the Drury Lane Fund, desiring that four poor comedians, not disinclined to live together, might therein have a joint home. He assigned to them a little bit of acting also;—that they might not appear dependents, he bequeathed a trifle to each, which each was to give away in charity, with an air of its being his own! Mindful, too, of their ease, habits, and sentiments, he left funds for the building of a "smoking summer-house," out of wood from Old Drury, and in sight of the temple to Shakspeare in Garrick's garden at Hampton. In remembrance of his own old vocation as a pastry-cook, and in token of love for brothers and sisters of his later calling, he left £100 Three per Cents for the purchase of a Twelfth Cake and wine, to be partaken of annually, "for ever," by the company of Drury Lane, in green room assembled. The Moulsey property was sold, and the proceeds were added to the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund.

A greater artist than Baddeley left the stage soon after him, in 1795, after three and thirty years of service; namely, Parsons. He was a Kentish man, who might have been an apothecary, or an excellent artist, but that he preferred the stage. He was a merry, honest fellow, who kept the house in a roar by his looks as well as words, and loved to make the actors laugh, who were on the stage with him, by some droll remark, uttered in an under tone. His forte lay in old men, his picture of whom, in all their characteristics, passions, infirmities, cunning, or imbecility, was perfect. When Sir Sampson Legend says to Foresight, "Look up, old star-gazer! Now is he poring on the ground for a crooked pin, or an old horse-nail, with the head towards him!" we are told "there could not be a finer illustration of the character which

Congreve meant to represent, than Parsons showed at that time in his face and attitude." He was finely discriminating, too. His Skirmish in the "Deserter" presented, says Adolphus, "a shrewd, quick-witted fellow, whose original powers were merged, but not absolutely drowned, in drink." In his own estimation, Corbaccio was his best played character; but, said he, generously, "All the merit I have in it I owe to Shuter." He was ready at repartee. "How do I look?" said an actress to him. "I can't tell," replied Parsons, "till you uncover your face!"

The town had not an old comic actor it esteemed more highly, except, perhaps, Palmer. The early life of John Palmer was full of disappointment; the latter end, of trials; the middle, of some follies; but nothing more. When he was in hopes of employment in the theatre, he had been told to go for a soldier. He "strolled," struggled, starved; and then was engaged first by Garrick, then by Foote, to do anything he was told to do, at a salary which barely found him in bread. Palmer slowly made his way, but it was nearly stopt for ever, by Mrs. Barry, in the "Grecian Daughter," stabbing him (Dionysius) with a real dagger. He subsequently built and opened the Royalty Theatre, in Wellclose Square, but was compelled to close it, by the patentees. They would not have molested him, if he had drawn his audiences only from the Tower Hamlets; but this was not the case. In January, 1788, Storer writes, from Golden Square, to Mr. Eden, "To-day, as I am banished from Court,—that we may have something, notwithstanding, to do with royalty, I am going with a party to Mr. Palmer's Royalty Theatre. We dine at the London Tavern; go afterwards to the play, and then return to supper, to Upper Seymour Street, Portman Square, a journey almost equal to yours in Spain." Palmer's life became a struggle with bailiffs. Sometimes, he passed a week together in the theatre; at others, he was carried out of it in some mysterious bit of theatrical property, He was often careless and imperfect, trusting to his wits, his impudence, and the "usual indulgence" of the audience. On one occasion he delivered a prologue without knowing a line of it. The prompter was beneath a toilet table, and to Palmer standing near, he gave line for line, which Palmer repeated, with abounding smile and action to make up for dropt words.

On the 19th of June, 1798, Palmer had finished, at Drury, as radiant with gaiety, on the stage, as if his heart were not breaking. Death had taken from his family circle his wife and the most

dearly loved of his sons. Sorrow for those who had departed, and anxiety for the remaining children who depended on him, affected him deeply, and, despite all effort, even when acting, he could not keep the dead or the living for a moment out of his memory. At length the night came (at the Liverpool theatre) when he was to repeat the character of the "Stranger," and then there was no simulation in his mournful aspect. He had got through his part to the middle of the opening scene of the fourth act. He had answered, "I love her still," to the query of Baron Steinfort (Whitfield) respecting his wife; and then to the question as to his children, he gave the reply, "I left them at a small town hard by;" but the words, falteringly uttered, had scarcely passed his lips, when he fell, dead, at Whitfield's feet!"

Poor Palmer! One cannot help having a kindly feeling for "Plausible Jack." "Plausible, am I?" he once asked; "you really rate me too highly. The utmost I ever did in that way was, when I was arrested by a bailiff; and I persuaded the fellow to bail me!"

After many of these actors had commenced their career, and long before some of them concluded it, a great player came, charmed, and departed, leaving a name and a reputation which render him worthy of a chapter to himself. I allude to Henderson.*

* For a fuller account of Baddeley, than the above chapter contains, and particularly of the ceremony of "cutting his cake" in the green-room of Drury Lane theatre, see my article in the *Temple Bar* magazine, for February, 1865.

CHAPTER XLIII.

JOHN HENDERSON.

In the bill of the Bath Theatre for October the 6th, 1772, the part of Hamlet is announced to be performed "by a young gentleman." On the 21st of the month, we read, "Richard III., by Mr. Courtney, the young gentleman who acted Hamlet." Mr. Courtney repeated those characters, and subsequently played Benedick, Macbeth, Bobadil, Bayes, Don Felix, and Essex; and on the 26th of December, having thus felt his way and become satisfied of his safety, we have "Henry IV.," with "Hotspur by Mr. Henderson." Under this name he acted Fribble, Lear, Hastings, Alonzo, and Alzuma; and became, at once, an established Bath favourite. At this time, he was five-and-twenty years of age. Descended from Scottish Presbyterians and English Quakers, with a father who was an Irish factor, Henderson is the sole celebrity of the street in which he was born, in March, 1747, Goldsmith Street, Cheapside. The father died too soon for his two sons to remember him in after life; but the boys had an excellent mother, who unconsciously trained one of her sons to the stage, by making him familiar with the beauties of Shakspeare. Having succeeded so far in art as to obtain a prize when he was Fournier's pupil, for a drawing exhibited at the Society of Arts; and having been as reluctant as Barry to be bound apprentice to a silversmith, Henderson longed to win honour by the sock and buskin. This desire was fostered by the sight of Garrick in the shop of Mr. Becket the bookseller, a friend of Henderson's. Garrick seldom went to coffee-houses, and never to taverns, but at Becket's shop he held a little court, and Henderson sighed to be as great as he. The weak-voiced lad, with no presence, and a consumptive look, could obtain favour from no one; least of all from Roscius. He went up to remote Islington, and, in the long room of an inn there, delivered Garrick's *Ode on the Shakspeare*

Jubilee. After this, Garrick received him, heard him recite, shook his head at a voice which was more woolly than silvery, and, after some counsel, procured for him an engagement at Bath, —at a trifling salary. For five seasons he was a cherished actor there. But his fame did not influence the London managers. At length, *exeunt* Garrick, Barry, Woodward, and Foote! and Colman, lacking novelty, at the Haymarket, invites, somewhat unwillingly, young Henderson from Bath. He appeared at the Little Theatre in 1777, and, in a little more than a month of acting nights, put £4,500 into the manager's pocket. He played Shylock, Hamlet, Leon, Falstaff (in "Henry IV.," and in the "Merry Wives"), Richard III., Don John, and Bayes. Walpole availed himself of Henderson's triumph to say something malicious of Garrick: "Garrick is dying of yellow jaundice on the success of Henderson, a young actor from Bath," which was not true.

In this first season he played three of his greatest parts—Shylock, Hamlet, and Falstaff. The first was selected for his *début*, contrary to his own inclination. Macklin's Shylock was the Shylock of all playgoers; but the difference between it and Henderson's attracted attention and audiences. Old Macklin himself praised his young rival's conception of the part, with energetic liberality. "And yet, sir," said Henderson, "I have never had the advantage of seeing you in the character." "It is not necessary to tell me that, sir," said Macklin. "I knew you had not, or you would have played it differently." Garrick also saw Henderson in the part, and remarked that Tubal was very creditably played indeed! It is said that Henderson, after delighting Garrick, when breakfasting with him in 1772, by imitations of Barry, Woodward, Love (whose single character of note was Falstaff), and some others, offended him by a close imitation of Garrick himself. Henderson seems to have been so little willing to offend, that in playing Bayes, he omitted the imitations of contemporary performers, by which all other actors of the parts had been wont to reap rich harvests of applause. Macklin said of him, that the young man had learned a great deal; but what remained for him was to unlearn much of it, in order that he might learn to be an actor! In this oracular manner there was more kindness than Henderson met with from Foote, previous to his first season in London. Henderson was permitted by him to begin a speech in "Hamlet," but Foote continually interrupted him by some unlucky joke; and when Henderson took his leave, Foote whispered one of the company, *he would not do*.

Henderson once requested Palmer "not to bring him forward in too many parts;" observing that it must be for the manager's interest, as well as his own credit, to have him studied in the parts he was to appear in: he added, "to learn words, indeed, is no great labour, and to pour them out no very difficult matter; it is done on our stage almost every night, but with what success I leave you to judge—*the generality of performers think it enough to learn the words;* and thence all that vile uniformity which disgraces the theatre." This was rather proud criticism, but Henderson's standard of propriety would not allow him to speak otherwise. In Hamlet, he came into direct contrast with Garrick, whose greatest idolaters found heavy fault in Henderson's young Dane, for flinging away his uncle's picture,—subsequent to the famous speech in which he compares the portraits of his father and uncle. On a following night, he retained the picture in his hand, and the same party ridiculed him, on the ground that if he was right the first night, he must necessarily have been wrong on the second! He was said, too, not to have managed his hat properly on first seeing the Ghost; and similar carpings were made against the new actor, only to hear whose words, "the fair Ophelia!" people went, as to the most exquisite music. But what was that to the Garrick faction who pronounced him disqualified, because in the closet scene he did not, in his agitation, upset the chair. "Mr. Garrick, sir, always overthrew the chair." I think he was the first actor who, with Sheridan, gave public readings. They filled Freemason's Hall, and their own pockets, by their talents in this way, and Henderson could as easily excite tears by his pathos, as he could stir laughter by a droll way of reciting Johnny Gilpin, which gave wild impetus to the sale of that picturesque narrative. His own temperament, however, was naturally grave, derived from that mother whose occasional melancholy was nearly allied to insanity. Yet he was not without humour, or he could not have played Falstaff with a success only inferior to Quin, nor have founded the Shandean Club in Maiden Lane, nor have written so quaint a pastoral love-song as his Damon and Phyllis. In acting Æsop, he delivered the fables with great significance. The chief characteristic of the part lay in its grim splenetic humour, such as he himself showed when he, the high-spirited pupil of Fournier, had to drive his master, when he gave drawing-lessons, and to clean the horse and chaise after reaching home again! He loved praise, honestly owned his love, and worked hard to win public favour. When he was cast for a

new character, he read the entire play, learned his own part, read the play again, and troubled himself no more about it, although a fortnight might elapse between the last rehearsal and the first performance. Previous to which latter occasion, it was his custom to dine well, and sit at his wine till summoned to rise and go forth. A Garrick-worshipper told him he was wrong. Mr. Garrick, on such occasions, shut himself up for the day, and dined lightly. Henderson was the last of the school of Garrick, and once imitated his master in his diet. The result was a cold and vapid performance of Bireno, in the "Law of Lombardy;" and Henderson registered a vow, to be original and dine generously on like occasions, in future.

Henderson was, in every respect, a gentleman; his social position was as good as that of any gentleman of his time. In Dublin, as in London, he was a welcome guest in the best society, even in that for which the stage had few attractions. Personally, he had natural obstacles to surmount. He was short, not gracefully moulded, lacked intelligent expression of the eye, and had a voice too weak for rage, and not silvery soft enough for love. But he had clear judgment, quick feeling, ready comprehension, and accurate elocution. Cumberland names Shylock, Falstaff, and Sir Giles, as his best characters, but there were portions of others in which he could not be excelled; "in the variety of Shakspeare's soliloquies, where more is meant than meets the ear, he had no equal," and this is high praise, for the difficulty of the task is work for a genius Never strong, his health failed him early, and on the 8th of November, 1785, he acted for the last time. The part was Horatius, in the "Roman Father." In less than three weeks, and at the age of thirty-eight, troops of friends escorted the body to Westminster Abbey,—one more addition to the silent company of the great of all degrees and qualities, from actors to kings. Professionally, Henderson did not die prematurely. Kemble had already been two years at Drury Lane, and the new school of acting was supplanting the old.

Henderson's readings were attended frequently by Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble; his voice was so flexible that his tones conveyed every phase of meaning. Even his way of reading the words: "They order this matter," said I, "better in France," had a world of significance in it, not to be found when uttered by others; and the letter of Mrs. Ford to Falstaff, when he read it on the stage, shook the house with such laughter as was seldom heard, save indeed when he imitated Garrick and Dr. Johnson,

the former reciting his ode, and the latter interrupting him by critical objections. I do not wonder that both Munden and John Kemble who, all their lives, had a longing to play Falstaff, abandoned the idea when they remembered Henderson's excellence.

At the period of Henderson's death, his early prophecy had been fulfilled, with regard to Mrs. Siddons;—to whose career we will now direct our notice.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SARAH SIDDONS.

On the 13th of June, 1755, Sarah Kemble was born, the first of twelve children, at a public-house, in Brecon, in which town, a score of years later, was born her youngest brother, Charles. By both parents she belonged to the stage. Her mother's father, (Ward) had been a respectable actor under Betterton, and was a strolling manager when the hair-dresser of the company, a Roman Catholic, eloped with and married the manager's daughter. His name was Roger Kemble. He was an actor too; love had helped to make him a very bad one. Fanny Furnaval, of the Canterbury company, drilled him into the worst Captain Plume that ever danced over the stage; but Mrs. Roger Kemble used in her later days to look at the grand old man, and assert that he was the only gentleman-like Falstaff she had ever seen. Mr. and Mrs. Kemble were "itinerants" when the first child of their marriage was born, a child who made her *début* on the London stage long before her father: the latter playing, and playing very well, the Miller of Mansfield, at the Haymarket, in 1788, for the benefit of the wife of his second son, Stephen. When Roger carried off Miss Ward, her father with difficulty forgave her,—and only on the ground that she had, at all events, obeyed his injunction,—not to marry an actor. "He will never be that," said the old player, of the Betterton era.

Mrs. Siddons's grandsire acted under Betterton, and Booth; her parents played with Quin; she herself fulfilled a professional career which commenced with Garrick, and ended with Lady Randolph to Mr. Macready's Glenalvon. She saw the brilliant but chequered course of Edmund Kean to nearly its close, and witnessed the *début* of Miss Fanny Kemble,—the whole history of the stage since the Restoration seems resumed therein.

Roger Kemble's children played, almost as soon as they could speak. Sarah's first audience compassionately hissed her, as too young to be listened to; but she won their applause by reciting a fable. At thirteen, she acted in the great room of the King's Head, Worcester,—among other parts, Ariel, in the "Tempest,"—her father, mother, sister Elizabeth, and brother John, acting in the same piece. For the next four or five years, there was much of itinerant life, till we find her at Wolverhampton, in 1773, acting a range of characters, from Lee's heroines to Rosetta, in "Love in a Village." In the latter case, the young Meadows was a Mr. Siddons, who had acted Hippolito in Dryden's "Tempest," when she played Ariel. In her father's company, she played all that the daughter of a manager chose to play, and she attracted admirers, before and behind the curtain. The Earl of Coventry and sundry squires were among the former. Among the latter was that poor player, an ex-apprentice from Birmingham, named Siddons, between whom and Sarah Kemble, there was love, lacking parental sanction. The country audiences sympathized with the young people, and applauded the lover, who introduced his sad story into a comic song, on his benefit night. As he left the stage, the stately manageress received him at the wing, and there greeted him with a ringing box of the ears. This led to the secession of both actors from the company. Mr. Siddons went, the world before him where to choose; Sarah Kemble, to the family of Mr. Greathead, of Guy's Cliff, Warwickshire. "She hired herself," says the *Secret History of the Green Room*,—"as lady's maid to Mrs. Greathead, at £10 per annum." "Her station," says Campbell, "was humble, but not servile, and her *principal* employment was to read to the elder Mr. Greathead." She probably fulfilled the double duty,—no disparagement at a time when the maids of ladies were often decayed ladies themselves. When Sarah Kemble went to Guy's Cliff, it was with no idea of permanently leaving the stage; and if it be true that Roger Kemble apprenticed his daughter Elizabeth to a mantua-maker in Leominster, and Frances to a milliner in Worcester, he narrowly missed marring their good fortunes. Though Elizabeth and Frances Kemble were not actresses of extraordinary merit, they had not to regret that they abandoned the vocations chosen for them by their parents, for that which was followed by their parents, themselves. From Guy's Cliff, Sarah Kemble was ultimately taken by her persevering wooer, to whom her father reluctantly gave her, at Trinity Church, Co-

ventry, on the 6th of November, 1773. The bride was in her nineteenth year. A month after the marriage, the name of "Mrs. Siddons" was, for the first time, in the playbill, at Worcester, to Charlotte Rusport, in the "West Indian," and Leonora, in the "Padlock." Shortly after, Roger Kemble saw Mr. and Mrs. Siddons depart for Chamberlain and Crump's company, in Cheltenham. Here Mrs. Siddons at once took her place. Her Belvidera excited universal admiration. Lord Ailesbury mentioned her to Garrick; and Lord Dungarvon's daughter, Miss Boyle, directed her wardrobe, lent her many of her own dresses, and helped to make others for her with her own hands. The Cheltenham "propertys" were of the poorest; but there were some that even the Honourable Miss Boyle could not supply. Thus, for the male disguise of the Widow Brady, Mrs. Siddons found, on the night of performance, that no provision had been made; but a gentleman in the boxes lent her his coat, while he stood at the side-scenes, with a petticoat over his shoulders, ready to receive his property when done with!

Garrick, on Lord Ailesbury's report, sent King down to see this actress of promise, and on King's warrant, engaged her for Drury Lane at £5 per week. Others say that it was on the warrant of Parson Bates, of the *Morning Post*, who greatly praised her Rosalind. Her first appearance was on the 29th of December, 1775, as Portia, "by a young lady," to King's Shylock. On January 2nd, 1776, she repeated Portia, "by Mrs. Siddons." On the 18th, she played Epicœne, but the part was subsequently assigned to another. On the 2nd of February, she acted Julia, in a new and poor farce, the "Blackamoor washed White," and on the 15th, Emily, in Mrs. Cowley's new comedy, the "Runaway," which part she had to surrender to Mrs. King. She was not more fortunate in Maria, her third original character, in "Love's Metamorphoses;" nor in Mrs. Strickland to Garrick's Ranger, did she excite any further remark save that it was played in a pathetic manner. Her second appearance with Garrick was as Lady Anne to his Richard, which she repeated twice, the last time on June 5, in presence of the royal family. Five nights later, Garrick took his farewell of the stage, and Mrs. Siddons's engagement was at an end. Mrs. Siddons concluded that the other actresses who plagued Garrick's life out, hated her, because Garrick was polite and even kind to her. Sheridan alleged, as a reason for not re-engaging her, that Garrick did not recognise in her a first-rate actress (which she was far from being at that

time). Woodfall thought her sensible, but too weak for London. "You are all fools!" said buxom Mrs. Abington.

The fragile, timid, faltering actress acquired strength in the country. Henderson, himself rising to excellence, acted with, and spoke well of, her. York pronounced her perfect, and Bath took her with the warrant, and retained her, its most cherished tragic actress, till the year 1782. On leaving the Bath stage, she pointed to her children as so many reasons for the step; and therewith went up to the metropolis. "She is an actress," wrote Henderson, "who has never had an equal, and will never have a superior." "My good reception in London," writes Mrs. Siddons, "I cannot but partly attribute to the enthusiastic accounts of me which the amiable Duchess of Devonshire had brought thither, and spread before my arrival." Poor Henderson!

With broken voice, the old nervousness, and a world of fears, she rehearsed Isabella, in Southerne's tragedy. When the night of the 10th of October, 1782, arrived, she dressed with a desperate tranquillity, and many sighs, and then faced the public, her son Henry, then eight years of age, holding her by the hand, and her father, Roger, looking on with a dismay that was soon converted into delight. Smith played Biron, and Palmer, Villeroy, but Siddons alone was heeded on that night, in which she gave herself up so thoroughly to the requirements of the part, that her young son, who had often rehearsed with her, was so overcome by the reality of the dying scene, that he burst into tears. "I never heard," she writes, "such peals of applause in all my life. I thought they would not have suffered Mr. Packer to end the play."

With the echoes of the shouting audience ringing in her ears, she went home solemnly and silently. "My father, my husband, and myself," she says, "sat down to a frugal, neat, supper, in a silence uninterrupted, except by exclamations of gladness from Mr. Siddons." With succeeding nights the triumph went on increasing. The management gave her Garrick's dressing-room, and gentlemen learned in the law presented her with a purse of a hundred guineas.

Walpole thus speaks of her in Isabella:—"She pleased me beyond my expectation, but not up to the admiration of the *ton*, two or three of whom were in the same box with me, particularly Mr. Boothby, who, as if to disclaim the stoic apathy of Mr. Meadows in "Cecilia," was all bravissimo. Mr. Crawfurd, too, asked me if I did not think her the best actress I ever saw? I said, 'By no means; we old folks were apt to be prejudiced in favour

of our first impressions. She is a good figure, handsome enough, though neither nose nor chin according to the Greek standard, beyond which both advance a good deal. Her hair is either red, or she has no objection to its being thought so, and had used red powder. Her voice is clear and good; but I thought she did not vary its modulations enough, nor ever approach enough to the familiar; but this may come when more habituated to the awe of the audience of the capital. Her action is proper, but with little variety; when without motion, her arms are not genteel. Thus, you see, madam, all my objections are very trifling; but what I really wanted, but did not find, was originality, which announces genius, and without which I am never intrinsically pleased. All Mrs. Siddons did, good sense or good instruction might give. I dare to say that were I one-and-twenty, I should have thought her marvellous; but, alas! I remember Mrs. Porter and the Dumesnil; and remember every action of the former in the very same part." Subsequently, he says:—"I cannot think Mrs. Siddons the greatest prodigy that ever appeared, nor go to see her act the same part every week, and cry my eyes out every time; were I five-and-twenty, I suppose I should weep myself blind, for she is a fine actress, and fashion would make me think a brilliant what now seems to me only a very good rose diamond."

After the tender Isabella came the heroic loveliness of Euphrasia, with Bensley for Evander, her success in which shook the laurels on the brows of Mrs. Yates, and the widow of Spranger Barry. Having given new life to Murphy's dull lines in a play which, nevertheless, does not lack incident, she appeared as Jane Shore to Smith's Hastings, and with such effect that not only were sobs and shrieks heard from the ladies, but men wept like children, and "fainting fits," says Campbell, "were long and frequent in the house."

To the Lothario of Palmer and Horatio of Bensley, Mrs. Siddons next played Calista, in the "Fair Penitent,"—that impersonation of pride, anguish, anger, shame, and sorrow,—and with undiminished success. But in Belvidera (to the Jaffier of Brereton, and Pierre of Bensley), she surpassed all she had hitherto accomplished over the minds of the audience. Her Belvidera, with its honest, passionate, overwhelming love and truth, was well contrasted with her scorn and magnificence of demeanour in Zara. The whole season was one of triumph,—the only dark spot in which was the failure of Hull's "Fatal Interview," in which she played Mrs. Montague, with little effect, though she liked her part. On the

Saturday nights of this season, John Scott, the future Chancellor Eldon, used to go to the lower gallery of Drury to see "a Mrs. Siddons," as he called her, in a letter to Surtees. "She is beyond all idea, capital," he writes. "I never saw an actress before. In my notion of just affecting, action, and elocution, she beats our deceased Roscius all to nothing." Poor Garrick!

Of Mrs. Crawford (Barry), the new actress entertained fears, which were not generously expressed, to Dr. Whalley. "I should suppose she has a very good fortune, and I should be vastly obliged if she would go and live very comfortably upon it . . . let her retire as soon as she pleases!" At this time, when her second benefit brought her nearly £700, her ideas of supreme bliss were limited to a cottage in the country, and a capital of £10,000.

Her success brought her many an enemy, the most unmanly of whom was an anonymous paragraph-writer in the newspapers. "He loaded her with opprobrium," says an anonymous contemporary, "for not alleviating the distresses of her sister," Mrs. Curtis, a vicious woman, who, according to the quaintly circumstantial writer, "would not conform to modesty, though offered a genteel annuity on that condition." Mrs. Curtis read lectures at Dr. Graham's Temple of Health, and the wayward woman attempted to poison herself in Westminster Abbey.—The enemies of Mrs. Siddons somehow connected her with both circumstances, as they subsequently did with old Roger Kemble being suffered by her to apply, humbly, for relief from some charitable fund, in the hands of a banker.

Ireland invited the new actress, and she crossed from Holyhead to Dublin in a storm. Landing in the middle of a wet night in June, no tavern would then receive a woman and a stranger, and it was with difficulty that her companion Brereton, a promising Irish actor, whom she had instructed in Jaffier, procured accommodation for her, in the house where he himself lodged. She played with equal success at Cork as at Dublin, particularly in Zara. From the former place she writes to Dr. Whalley:—"I have sat to a young man in this place who has made a small full-length portrait of me in Isabella, upon the first entrance of Biron . . . he has succeeded to admiration." Mrs. Siddons returned to England, richer by £1,000 by her Irish summer excursion, and with an antipathy against the people, which could only be momentary in the daughter of a lady born in Clonmel. Her season of 1783-4 at Drury was doubly marked. She played two Shakspearean characters; Isabella, in "Measure

for Measure," and Constance, in "King John;"—to the King of her brother, John Kemble. The first was a greater success than the second; but Constance became ultimately one of the most perfect of her portraitures.

To her brother's Beverley, she played the wife, in a way which affected the actors as much as it did the audience. Miss O'Neill, perhaps, equalled her in this character, as far as earnestness is concerned. "Her lovely neck and shoulders," says the authoress of *Lady Audley's Secret*, "became suffused with a crimson glow of shame and indignation when the actress was Mrs. Beverley, and insulted by Stukeley, in her poverty and sorrow." Probably the dramatic public had never been so excited as it was by Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, and Palmer, in the "Gamester." The play had such fascination, through those actors, that people went, again and again, to see it, in spite of themselves! I have heard of one old play-goer who was thus wrought upon, and who, at last, in order to escape the depression, the pain, the rage, and the hysteria which affected the audience, used to place himself behind the small square of glass in one of the box-doors, and thus witness the performance, without hearing it! There were passages in Palmer's Stukeley which made the audience assail him with cries of horror and indignation. In Mrs. Crawford's great part, Lady Randolph, she achieved a triumph. The old actress had played the part, on her re-appearance at Covent Garden in November, 1783. Her oldest admirers (some critics excepted) confessed that her powers were shaken. A month afterwards Mrs. Siddons played the same character, for her benefit, to the Young Norval of Brereton, when the old actress succumbed at once, by comparison; but Mrs. Siddons did not excel her, if the comparison be confined to the period when each actress was in youth, strength, and beauty. "Mrs. Siddons," says Campbell, "omitted Mrs. Crawford's scream, in the far famed question, "Was he alive?" In 1801, Mr. Simons, says Genest, "in a small party at Bath, went through the scene between Old Norval and Lady Randolph,—his imitation of Mrs Crawford was most perfect, particularly in 'Was he alive?' Mrs. Piozzi, who was present, said to him,—'do not do that before Mrs Siddons; she would not be pleased.'" The King shed tears, however, at her acting; and the Queen appointed Mrs. Siddons preceptress in English reading to the Princesses, without any emolument; and kept her standing in stiff and stately dress, including a hoop, which Mrs. Siddons especially detested, till she was ready to

faint! The King praised her correct emphasis, mimicked the false ones of other actors, and set her above Garrick on one point, that of repose, whereas, he said, "Garrick could never stand still. He was a great fidget." The Countesses entrapped her into parties where crowds of well-bred people stood on the chairs to stare at her. One invalid Scotch lady, whose doctor had forbidden her going to the theatre, went unintroduced to Mrs. Siddons's residence, in Gower Street, and calmly sat down, gazed at her for some minutes, and then walked silently away. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted his name on the *hem of her garment*, in his portrait of her as the Tragic Muse, and Dr. Johnson kissed her hand, and called her "My dear Madam," on his own staircase. Statesmen were glad, when she played, to sit among the fiddlers; and the fine gentlemen of the day, including him of "Wales," visited her in her dressing-room, after the play, "to make their bows." And then she rode home in "her own carriage!"—"She is a prodigiously fine woman!" said Johnson to Dr. Glover, who agreed, but asked,—"don't you think she is finer upon the stage, when she is adorned by art?" "Sir," said Johnson, "when she is on the stage, art does not adorn her, *nature* adorns her there, and *art* glorifies her!"

Edinburgh was impatient to see her, but slow in making up its mind about her. One supreme effort alone, in Lady Randolph, elicited from a generous critic in the pit, the comment, uttered aloud, "That's nae bad!" Glasgow gave her not only applause but a service of plate. In Dublin, where, probably, her expressed dislike of the Irish people had been reported, there was great opposition to her. Her engagements stood in the way of charitable benefits, and no sacrifices she made to further the latter, whether for societies or individuals, were allowed to her credit. Irish actors little relished her stage arrangements made for effect, and Irish managers were not delighted with her terms of half the receipts; altogether, Mrs. Siddons returned to London in saddened temper. In Dublin she had raised a storm; in Edinburgh, where crowds of unwashed people were crammed nightly to see her, in an unventilated theatre, a fever broke out, and spread over the city. As once in the case of Garrick, so now with the great actress; it was called the *Siddons' fever*, as if she were responsible for it! The Edinburgh enthusiasm, at last, surpassed all manifestations elsewhere. The General Assembly of the Kirk arranged its meetings with reference to Mrs. Siddons's acting, as the younger members followed the artist to

study elocution! People, during her first engagement of three weeks assembled in crowds, before the doors were opened, sometimes as early as noon. As soon as admission was given, there ensued a fierce struggle which disregarded even the points of bayonets; and, as soon as the play was over, porters and servants took up a position, standing, lying, sleeping, but all ready to secure places on the opening of the box-office on the following day. On one occasion there were applications for 2,557 places, of which the house numbered but 630; and when, at night, the struggle was renewed for these, the loss of property, in costume and its attendant luxuries of jewellery and the like, was enormous. One night, as Mrs. Siddons was playing Isabella, and had uttered the words, (on discovering her first husband, in whose absence she had re-married,) "Oh, my Biron! my Biron!" a young Aberdeenshire heiress, Miss Gordon of Gight, sent forth a scream as wild as that of Isabella, and, taking up the words in a hysterical frenzy, was carried out, still uttering them. Next year this impressible lady was wooed and won by a Byron, the honourable John of that name, by whom she became the mother of one more famous than the rest, Lord Byron, the "lord of himself, that heritage of woe." Lady Gray, of Gask, told my friend, Mr. Robert Chambers, that she "never could forget those ominous sounds of 'Oh, my Biron!'"

Contemporary critics expressed an opinion that she played too frequently. "If she hopes," says one, "to have the gratification of being followed by crowds, she should never perform more than once a week, or twelve times in a season." Mrs Delaney made a similar remark with respect to Garrick. Mrs. Siddons was, however, equal to more fatigue than some of her admirers would have had her undergo. In four days she achieved the (then) incredible task of acting in three theatres, so wide apart as London, Reading, and Bath! On her return to London, she found the town possessed by reports of her pride, arrogance, and lack of kindness to her poorer colleagues. A cabal interrupted her performance during several nights; but even when she triumphed over it, by proving the injustice of her accusers, she did not entirely recover her peace of mind. She felt that she had chosen a humiliating vocation. There were, however, bright moments in it. In Franklin's "Earl of Warwick," her superb Margaret of Anjou caused the play-goers who had applauded Mrs. Yates, to acknowledge, that great as the original representative was, a greater had arisen in Mrs. Siddons. But when the latter played

Zara, the supremacy of Mrs. Cibber was only divided. In Cumberland's "Carmelite," in which she played Matilda to the Montgomerie of Kemble, she produced little effect. The great actress had no such poets as the great Mrs. Barry had, to fit her with parts; and, lacking such, fell back upon the old. Her Camiola, in Massinger's "Maid of Honour," was, however, only a passing success.

She made ample amends for all by her triumph in Lady Macbeth in 1785. Walpole himself could hardly have questioned the *originality* of her conception of the part. Mrs Siddons imagined the heroine of this most tragic of tragedies to be a delicate blonde, who ruled by her intellect, and subdued by her beauty, but with whom no one feeling of common general nature was congenial; a woman prompt for wickedness, but swiftly possessed by remorse, one who is horror-stricken for herself and for the precious husband, who, more robust and less sensitive, plunges deeper into crime, and is less moved by any sense of compassion or sorrow! Mrs. Siddons was as great as Mrs. Pritchard in this one character. In one effect, Mrs. Pritchard remained, however, supreme. When Macbeth meets the suggestion to murder Duncan, with, "If we should fail!" she used to reply with a triumphant—We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll *not fail!*" Mrs. Siddons merely answered the "If we should fail!" with a subdued "We fail. But screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll *not* fail," which was tame in comparison. But this night of her first success formed an epoch in dramatic history. Sheridan, the manager, had dreaded a fiasco, for no other reason than that, in the sleep-walking scene, Mrs. Siddons would not carry the candlestick about with her! Mrs. Pritchard had always done so, and any omission in this respect would be treated by the audience as a mark of disrespect to the older actress! The audience were too enthralled by the younger player to think of such trifles. Mason, the poet, hated Mrs. Siddons, as he had adored Mrs. Pritchard, and friends abstained from pronouncing her name in his presence. She subdued him, of course, and they played duets together at Lord Harcourt's; but she could make nothing of the old poet's Elfrida, and Mrs. Pritchard was never displaced from the shrine she occupied in his memory.

Lord Harcourt's judgment of Mrs. Siddons, in Lady Macbeth, is thus expressed:—"To say that Mrs. Siddons, in one word, is superior to Mrs. Pritchard in Lady Macbeth, would be talking nonsense, because I don't think that it is possible; but, on the

other hand, I will not say with those *impartial* judges, Mr. Whitehead and Miss Fauquier, that she does not play near as well. That she has much more expression of countenance, and can assume parts with a spirit, cannot be denied: but she wants the dignity, and above all, the unequalled compass and melody of Mrs. Pritchard. I thought her wonderful and very fine in the rest of that scene. She throws a degree of proud and filial tenderness into this speech, 'Had he not resembled,' &c., which is new, and of great effect. Her 'Are you a man!' in the banquet scene, I thought inferior to Mrs. Pritchard's; and for the parts spoken at a great distance her voice wanted power. Her countenance, aided by a studious and judicious choice of head-dress, was a true picture of a mind diseased, in the sleeping scene, and made one shudder; and the effect, as a picture, was better in that than it had ever been with the taper, because it allows of variety in the actress of washing her hands; but the sigh was not so horrid, nor was the voice so sleepy, nor yet quite so articulate as Mrs. Pritchard's." If Walpole may be trusted, Mrs. Siddons's ideas of Lady Macbeth had not always been identical. I find this noticed by Walpole, in 1783:—"Mrs. Siddons continues to be the mode, and to be modest and sensible. She declines great dinners, and says the business and cares of her family take her whole time. When Lord Carlisle carried her the tribute money from Brookes's, he said she was not *maniérée* enough. Mrs. Siddons was desired to play Medea and Lady Macbeth. 'No,' she replied, 'she did not look on them as female characters.'" One of her chief desires was that Walpole should see her in Portia, in which she had failed. In the passionate scenes of so poor a play as "Percy," Walpole greatly admired her; but he found her voice hollow and defective in cool declamation The first suggestion she received of the best mode of expressing intensity of feeling was from seeing the Egyptian statues at Lansdowne House, with the arms close down by the side, and the hands fast clenched. Mrs. Siddons having trained Brereton into being a good actor, Brereton was grateful, and his good-natured friends conduced to Mrs. Brereton's peace of mind, by reporting that he was in love with the great actress; and the "malady not easily accounted for," as the theatrical biographies call the insanity which compelled him to leave the stage, was set down to over much regard for, and a little difference with "a great tragic actress, of whom he is said to be very fond." Mrs. Siddons writes to Dr. Whalley (March 13, 1785), "I have been very

unhappy. Envy, malice, detraction, all the fiends of hell have compassed me round about to destroy me; 'but blessed be God who hath given me the victory,' &c. I have been charged with almost everything bad, except incontinence; and it is attributed to me as thinking a woman may be guilty of every crime, provided she retain her chastity. God help them, and forgive them; they know but little of me."

Poor Brereton died in confinement, in 1787; and if his wife had been rendered unhappy by the report of his love for Mrs. Siddons, his widow was rendered happy by the love of Mrs. Siddons's brother for herself; and Mrs. Brereton, the lively Priscilla Hopkins of the old days when her father was prompter, became Mrs. John Kemble. Meanwhile, at other adorers of her own, Mrs. Siddons only laughed. But her Desdemona increased the number of her lovers, old and young. The character is in such strong contrast with that of Lady Macbeth, that the public were not prepared for the new and more delicate fascination. "You have no idea," she writes, "how the innocence and playful simplicity of my Desdemona have laid hold on the hearts of the people. I am very much flattered by this, as nobody has ever done anything with that character before."

Nevertheless, the sense of humiliation does not seem to have left her. She announces the marriage of her sister Elizabeth with Mr. Whitelock, a "worthy man," though an actor; but that of another sister, Frances, has a more jubilant tone in the proclaiming; "Yes, my sister is married, and I have lost one of the sweetest companions in the world. She has married a most respectable man, though of small fortune; and I *thank God, that she is off the stage.*" This was Mrs. Twiss. Another sister, we only remember as the old-fashioned novelist, "Anne" (Hutton) "of Swansea." The theatrical gossip in Mrs. Siddons's letters is generally epigrammatic: "Miss Younge," she writes to Dr. Whalley, "is married to Mr. Pope, a very boy, and the only one she will have by her marriage." In 1786, she says, "We have a great comic actress now, called Mrs. Jordan. She has a vast deal of merit, but, *in my mind*, is not perfection." What Mrs. Siddons had acquired already by the stage, we learn from her own words: "I have at last, my friend, attained the ten thousand pounds which I set my heart upon, and am now perfectly at ease with respect to fortune." In then suburban Gower Street, was established a happy household, the master of which had friends who borrowed four hundred pounds at a time, and the mistress others

to whom she lent smaller sums, and who thought her ungrateful when she asked, as she did without scruple, for her money. Johnson said of her, that she was one of the few persons who had withstood the corruption of the two greatest corruptors in the world—money and love of fame.

Mrs. Siddons played Rosalind in April, 1785, to the Orlando of Brereton. She dressed the character ill, as the disguised Rosalind; her costume was severely handled by the critics. As Miss Seward magniloquently put it, "the scrupulous prudery of decency produced an ambiguous vestment, that seemed neither male nor female." The character was "totally without archness," said Young; "how *could* such a countenance be arch?" Campbell, like Walpole, says, that in comedy she gathered no laurels. Mrs. Pritchard, Miss Farren, and Mrs. Jordan excelled her there. But, throughout the kingdom she was recognised as Queen of Tragedy. In Scotland, a sensitive man in the Glasgow gallery exclaimed, "She's a fallen angel!" and Edinburgh fish-wives looked with interest on the lady who had "gar them greet, yestreen!"

"I am going to undertake your adored Hermione this winter," writes Mrs. Siddons to Dr. Whalley, "You know I was always afraid of her, and I am not a bit more bold than I was." This timidity was not justified; her Hermione had grand points. The simple words, 'Why, *Pyrrhus!*" when Orestes (Smith) asked her whom she would have him murder, thrilled the remotest auditor by their emphasis. But she could thrill actors as well as auditors; playing Ophelia for her second benefit, 1786, in the mad scene, she spoke some words in so strange a manner, as she touched the arm of the Queen, that the memory of so practised a player as Mrs. Hopkins was disturbed, and she stood awed and silent. Though Ophelia was not a triumph, (there she was inferior to Mrs. Cibber,) nor the Lady in "Comus," nor Cleone, to which nobody went on the second night, for the strange reason, that Mrs. Siddons was too affecting! her position was unassailably established. Mrs. Jordan (who excelled her in Rosalind) she surpassed in Imogen; for which she asked of the artist Hamilton to sketch for her "a boy's dress to conceal the person as much as possible." She continued to try comic parts, but the laugh excited was not hearty; her Lady Townly had no airiness; her smiles are spoken of as glorious condescensions; when Bannister was asked if her comic acting had ever pleased him, he "shook his head, and remarked," says Campbell, "that the burthen of

her inspiration was too heavy for comedy," in which, according to Colman, she was only "a frisking Gog." Miss Baillie, on the other hand, insists that but for unfair discouragement she would have been a great comic actress. In private life, she had great relish for humour, and told laughable stories in her slow way, as well as read scenes in comedy with great effect. And yet Katharine, with its passionate expression, was as little thought of as Rosalind. One would have thought this character would have fitted her. Her own judgment as to what suited her is not satisfactorily exhibited in her preference of Tate's Cordelia and of Dryden's Cleopatra to those of Shakspeare. But she distrusted her own judgment in some things. "Mr. Siddons," she remarks to Dr. Whalley, "is a much better judge of the conduct of a tragedy than myself."

Young Mr. Greathead, of Guy's Cliff, was the author of a tragedy, the "Regent," the heroine in which he designed for her acting. She liked neither the play nor her part in it; but how could she disoblige the present head of a family where she had found an asylum, when love had disturbed the tenor of her life? Therefore, she wrote to Dr. Whalley:—"September 1, 1787.—"It certainly has some beautiful poetry, but it strikes me that the plot is very lame, and the characters very, very ill-sustained in general, but more particularly the lady, for whom the author had me in his eye. This woman is one of those monsters (I think them) of perfection, who is an angel before her time, and is so entirely resigned to the will of heaven, that (to a very mortal like myself) she appears to be the most provoking piece of still life one ever had the misfortune to meet. Her struggles and conflicts are so weakly expressed, that we conclude they do not cost her much pain, and she is so pious that we are satisfied she looks upon her afflictions as so many convoys to heaven, and wish her there, or anywhere else but in the tragedy." The event justified her sentiments, and the "Regent" did not live. She continued, however, to reap her harvest of laurels, gathering them most profusely by her acting in Queen Katherine, which had been recommended to her by Dr. Johnson. By simply saying, "You were the Duke's Confessor, and lost your office on the complaint of the tenants," she put the surveyor, to whom the words were addressed, into such perspiring agony, that as he came off, crushed by her earnestness, he declared he would not for the world meet her black eyes on the stage again! In the procession scene, in her brother's mutilation of Shakspeare's Coriolanus, her dumb show,

as Volumnia, triumphing in the triumph of her son, attracted every eye, touched every heart, and caused the pageant itself to be as nothing, except as she used it for her purpose. It is strange that one so gifted should have ventured, at four-and-thirty, to act Juliet, (who is not fourteen), but Miss Weston describes it as a fine performance, "She contrived to make her appearance light, youthful, and airy, beyond imagination. Her figure was very well fitted, by previous indisposition." Her Juliet, however, was a mistake.

But authors make as many mistakes as actresses. When the King, in Miss Burney's tragedy, "Edwy and Elgiva," cried, "bring in the bishop," the audience, thinking of the mixture so called, broke into laughter, which was only exceeded when Mrs. Siddons died, under a hedge, on a superb couch! Genest says, people laughed at her dying Zara! but when, in "Edward and Eleanora," the two babes were brought in, in imperial frocks and long coating, and were handed into the bed of their dying mother, the audience *did* break forth into loud hilarity. Once also, when Mrs. Siddons was playing Agnes, in Lillo's "Fatal Curiosity," and the flesh of the audience crept at her suggestion of murdering the stranger, who is her son, one gentleman in the pit laughed aloud; he was in hysterics, at her acting. At other times, the actress was overcome by herself. In the fainting scene of Arpasia, in "Tamerlane," after the wild cry, "Love! Death! Moneses!" Mrs. Siddons fell back violently, clutching her drapery, and her dress all disordered,—a swoon in earnest, which caused a rush, from the pit and boxes, of part of the excited and sympathising audience. At the close of the last century, Jane Shore, Lady Macbeth, Cordelia, Mrs. Beverley, and Isabella, are said to be the parts in which—

> "She alone the soul could thrill,
> And melt us down, like Circe, to her will."

The simile, however, is not flattering.

At the beginning of the present century Mrs. Siddons more than once expressed a desire "to be at rest." The labours of her life were equal in magnitude to her triumphs. Could she but realise £300 a year above that she had already acquired for her family by her sole and brilliant exertions, she would begin to be "lazy, saucy, and happy." Nevertheless, when the period of 1812 arrived, and she had determined on retirement, she was less bold of spirit. It was like taking the first step of the ladder, she

said, which led to the next world. She upheld the dignity of her vocation, by refusing to act with the "young Roscius," while to play inferior parts in the same piece with her, actresses of reputation esteemed it an honour. Miss Pope, on having the part of Lucy, in "George Barnwell," sent to her, returned it with some anger; but when she was told that Mrs. Siddons was about to play Milwood (to Charles Kemble's Barnwell), Miss Pope resumed the character with eagerness. Mrs. Siddons began and ended her London theatrical life with Shakspeare,—commencing in 1775 with Portia, and terminating in June, 1812, with Lady Macbeth. Some few subsequent appearances, indeed, there were. When her son, Henry Siddons, was proprietor of the Edinburgh Theatre, he thought that if his mother and uncle would play for him, in the same pieces, on the same night, he should retrieve his fortunes. He wrote separately to both, and received respective answers. That from Mrs. Siddons intimated that she would act, for half the receipts and a free benefit. The reply from John Kemble expressed his readiness to act, for a free benefit and half the receipts! Henry Siddons had to look elsewhere for less expensive aid! After his death, and subsequent to his mother's farewell to the London stage, she played several nights in Edinburgh, *gratis*, for the benefit of his family: and critics saw no other change in her, than that she looked older. At two periods, Mrs. Trench had two different opinions of her. 1798, December 3.—"Went with Lord and Lady Yarmouth, in a private box, to see Mrs. Siddons in 'Isabella' and 'Blue Beard.' I think Mrs. Siddons is less various than formerly, and is so perpetually in paroxysms of agony that she wears out their effect. She does not reserve her 'great guns' for critical situations, but fires them off as minute guns, without any discrimination." In 1822, Mrs. Trench could only remember an unequalled excellence in an actress, whose very name her admirers used to pronounce with a tender respect: her might, her majesty of grace, and her Volumnia (to the Coriolanus of her brother), are among the cherished memoirs registered by the diarist. Mrs. Siddons's "last" appearance in public was in June, 1819, when she played Lady Randolph, for the benefit of Charles Kemble. Lady Macbeth and Queen Katherine were included in the readings which she continued to give during a few years. These were especially relished by Queen Charlotte and her family;—the guerdon for reading at Windsor, including Othello, read aloud one Sunday evening, was a gold chain with a cross of many-coloured jewels.

Her beauty, personal and mental, she retained to the last,—the former only slightly touched by time. Her sense of the beautiful was also fresh to the last. Some doubted her sensibility; at Burke's eloquence, on the Hastings trial, she burst into tears; but ill-natured people thought she was acting!

She outlived all her children, except her daughter Cecilia,* but she was so well-tempered as to create the means of consolation, and in modelling statuary found relief from sorrow. Hannah More heartily applauded her private life; and in truth her religion was cheerful, and her rule of life honest. Those who knew her best have recorded her beauty and her grace, her noble carriage, divine elocution, and solemn earnestness; her grandeur and her pathos, her correct judgment, her identification of whatever she assumed, and her abnegation of self. Erskine studied her cadences and intonations, and avowed that he owed his best displays to the harmony of her periods and pronunciation. According to Campbell, she increased the heart's capacity for tender, intense, and lofty feelings, and seemed something above humanity, in presence of which, humanity was moved, exalted, or depressed, according as she willed. Her countenance was the interpreter of her mind, and that mind was of the loftiest, never stooping to trickery, but depending on nature to produce effect. "She was as true," says her niece, "in her performance of the wretched Milwood, as in her personifications of the greatest of Shakspeare's creations!" She may have borne her professional habits into private life, and "stabbed the potatoes," or awed a draper's assistant by asking, "Will it wash?" but there was no affectation in this;—as she said, still in her tragic way, "Witness truth, I did not wish to be tragical!" After Mrs. Siddons left the stage, *Guy Mannering* appeared, and Meg Merrilies gave the actress so much clearer an idea of what Shakspeare meant his Scottish witches to be, that she changed her style of reading the scene of the witches in Macbeth. This lofty-minded actress died on the 8th of June, 1831, and was buried in Paddington churchyard.

* The writer of a note, addressed to me in February, 1865, says:—"Mr. George Siddons, of the Bengal Civil Service, Mrs. Siddons's second son, went to India in 1803, and returned home in 1843, surviving his mother some fifteen or twenty years. I *believe* he was my father. Yours, &c., J. H. SIDDONS."

CHAPTER XLV.

JOHN KEMBLE.

On the 1st of February, 1757, John Philip Kemble was born, at Prescot, in Lancashire. He acted when a child, but he was placed at school, at Worcester, whence he passed through Sedgley to Douay, where he was remarkable for his elocution. His college-fellow, Bishop Miller, or Milner, as he chose to call himself, used to affirm that *he* was considered equal to Kemble! In 1776, Kemble may be said to have made his first public appearance at Wolverhampton In various northern towns he endured a stern probation, and made sundry mistakes. He played Plume, Ranger, and Archer, which were unsuited to him; and he was laughed at in tragedy,—by persons of distinction in York! He resented this with such dignity, that the York people insisted on apology; and when some in the house declared he should make none, he thanked them with such a weight of heavy argument to show they and he were right, that those bewildered Yorkists demanded of him to beg pardon immediately! Subsequently, Kemble published fugitive poems, which he was afterwards glad to burn; wrote a tragedy, "Belisarius," and a comedy, the "Female Officer;" composed a Latin ode, *Ad Somnium*, and a Latin epitaph for his dead comrade, Inchbald; laid the foundations of friendship with the Percys; gave lectures on oratory; and, at twenty-three, made an attempt to improve Shakspeare's "Comedy of Errors," by turning it into a farce, called "Oh, it's impossible!" the chief point in which was, that the audience should be as puzzled about the two Dromios, of whom he made a couple of niggers, as their masters themselves!

At York, one Cummins was held to be superior to Kemble. In Ireland those who remembered Barry, were slow to admit Kemble's equality. He nearly made shipwreck of his fame by playing

comedy, but he rose in Irish estimation by his acting in tragedy; and he won all hearts by his finished performance of Jephson's "Count of Narbonne," in which he represented the Count, to the Adelaide of Miss Francis—the Mrs. Jordan of later years. On the 30th of September, 1783, Kemble first appeared in London, at Drury Lane, as Hamlet. The fierceness and variety of the criticism denote that an original actor had come before the critics. His novel readings were commented on. The utmost one critic could urge was that the player was "too scrupulously graceful;" and objection was fairly made to his pronouncing the word "lisp," to Ophelia, as "*lithp*." Just previous to this successful *début* at Drury Lane, Kemble's brother Stephen had moderately succeeded in Othello, at Covent Garden, where the management had secured the *big*, instead of the *great*, Mr. Kemble. Just subsequent to the former first appearance, two sisters of these players, Elizabeth and Frances Kemble (afterwards Mrs. Whitelock and Mrs. Twiss), made an attempt to share in a family glory, in which they had no abiding part. These ladies passed away, and left that glory to be divided by Kemble, and his sister, Mrs. Siddons. Mrs. F. Kemble, however, says of her aunt Frances, "What a charming actress she was! What a charming thrilling voice she had!"

Some time elapsed before Mrs. Siddons and her brother played in the same piece. Smith had possession of parts of which custom forbade his being deprived; and it was not till each had played singly in various stock pieces, that they came together in "King John," and subsequently in the "Gamester." Grandly as the King was acted, the Constance of Mrs. Siddons was the magic by which the audience was most moved. It was the same in the "Gamester;" the sufferings of Mrs. Beverley touched all hearts; but the instability, selfishness, cowardice, and maudlin of the wretched husband, excited contempt and execration, but that was precisely what the author, as well as the actor, intended. It was not till March, 1785, that brother and sister appeared together in another play, "Othello"—the Moor and Desdemona being assigned to them. Neither player was ever identified with the character respectively acted. Kemble performed the Moor in the uniform of a British general of the actor's own time! He made a more certain flight by selecting "Macbeth" for his benefit, and playing the chief part to his sister's Lady; but it was only for one night. The Thane belonged by right to Smith, and as long as he remained a member of the company, the

original Charles Surface was entitled to one of the sublimest parts in all the range of tragedy. Even when Mrs. Siddons selected the "Merchant of Venice" for her benefit, and played Portia, Shylock fell, as by right, to King, and Kemble had to be content with Bassanio! He had his revenge in acting Lear to his sister's Cordelia, in January, 1788. The admirers of Garrick confessed that Kemble's Lear was nearly equal to that of their idol; but Boaden says that Kemble never played it so grandly and so touchingly as on that night. Kemble is said to have been much attached to Miss Phillips (afterwards Mrs. Crouch), and to have been tenderly affected by Mrs. Inchbald — for he composed a Latin epitaph for the tomb of her defunct husband. I find further mentioned "a young lady of family and fortune at York," whose cruel brother interfered in the matter, and also that "the daughter of a noble lord, once high in office, was attached to him, and that the father bought off the match with £3,000!" The lady he *did* marry was a lady indeed. Her parents had fought their way well through life, for Mr. Hopkins was a strolling player when he married the daughter of a Somersetshire Boniface; but the Bridegroom became Prompter, and Mrs. Hopkins a respectable actress at Drury Lane. One of their daughters, Priscilla, belonged to the company, when young Brereton persuaded her to take his name, and share his fortunes. About a year after the death of this husband, she said to Mrs. Hopkins, "My dear mother, I cannot guess what Mr Kemble means: he passed me just now, going up to his dressing-room, and chucking me under the chin, said, 'Ha, Pop! I shouldn't wonder if you were soon to hear something very much to your advantage!' What could he mean?" "Mean!" the sensible mother answered, "why he means to propose marriage; and if he does, I advise you not to refuse him." The wedding was dramatic enough. Mrs Hopkins, her daughter, Jack Bannister and his wife, walked from Jack's house in Frith Street, to John's in Caroline Street, Bedford Square, to breakfast with the bridegroom, who did not seem to expect them. Thence, on a December morning, 1787, in two hackney coaches, the party went to Church, and were married by "the well-known Parson Este." The bride—no dinner having been thought of by any one else—dined early, the bridegroom late, at the Bannisters'; at whose house Kemble remained with Mrs. Bannister, while Mr. Bannister and Mrs. Kemble went to Drury Lane, where they had to act in the "West Indian." The lady's former name was in the bill. On her return to Frith

Street, Kemble took his good wife home, and the next acting day, Monday, Lady Anne was acted by "*Mrs. Kemble*" to the Richard of Mr. Smith. On the 14th, man and wife played, Sir Giles and his daughter Margaret. The delicate audience seized on a marked passage in the play, and laughed as they applauded, to indicate they knew all about it. Sir Giles remained grave and self-possessed.

Subsequently, Kemble attained the management of Drury Lane, succeeding King, in 1788-9. His first character was Lord Townly; his second, Macbeth. In the former, he was only second to Barry; in Macbeth, from the weakness of his voice, he failed to rise to an equality with Garrick. Yet, the author of the *Dramad* said of him that in Macbeth, Hamlet, and Richard, "he could make e'en Garrick's loss be felt no more." Leon followed, with some state; Sciolto in which he rendered the stern paternal principle sublime; Mirabel, in which he was to be distanced by his brother, Charles; and Romeo, in which he never approached the height of Barry. On his revival of "Henry VIII.," he left Bensley in possession of his old part, Wolsey, and for the sake, it is said, of giving a "duteous and intelligent observance" to his sister in the heavier scenes, doubled the parts of Cromwell and Griffith in his own person. His great Wolsey triumph was a glory of a later time; so was the triumph of his Coriolanus His first season as manager was a decided success, as regards the acting of himself and sister, and also the novelties produced. His second was marked by revivals, such as "Henry V." and the "Tempest," and adaptations of the "False Friend," of Vanbrugh, and the "Rover" of Aphra Behn. In the first piece, in which Kemble played the King better than he did his other Kings, Richard and John, he made a fine point in starting up from prayer and expression of penitence, at the sound of the trumpet. In lighter pieces he was less successful. His Don John, the Libertine, was as far beyond his powers as were the songs of Cœur de Lion, in Burgoyne's pretty re-casting of Sedaine. How he cared to attempt such a feat as the last is inexplicable,—but did not Kemble act Charles Surface? and take, as a compliment, Sheridan's assurance that he had "entirely *executed* his design?"

Fortune attended the Kemble management, although George III.'s patronage was bestowed on the rival house. With a short interval, John Kemble was manager of Drury Lane till 1801. In the following year he went abroad, the affairs of Drury having fallen into confusion; and in 1803, having purchased a sixth

share of Covent Garden, he succeeded Lewis in the management of that theatre, and remained there till his retirement in 1817, at the close of the season in which Mr. Macready made his first appearance in London, as Orestes; and Lucius Junius Booth, as Richard, flashed promise for a moment, which straightway died out. With Kemble's departure from Drury Lane closes the first part of his career. He had begun it with £5 per week, and ended it with a weekly salary, strangely reckoned, of £56 14s. He had borne himself well throughout. He had a lofty scorn of anonymous assailants; was solemn enough in his manners not to give a guinea, for drink, to the theatrical guard, without stupendous phrases; but he could stoop to "knuckle down" at marbles with young players on the highway; and to utter jokes to them with a Cervantic sort of gravity. He addressed noisy and unappreciative audiences with such neat satire that they thought he was apologising, when he was exposing their stupidity. I do not know if he were generous in criticism of his fellow actors; he said of Cooke's Sir Pertinax, that comedy had nothing like it! This *looks* satirical; and he certainly never praised Cooke's tragedy. The utmost he ever said of Kean was, that "the gentleman was terribly in earnest." On the other hand, his own worshippers nearly choked him with incense. Boaden said that Kemble was at the head of the Academics, Cooke merely at the head of the vulgar! and he approached blasphemy when he tells us that Kemble's features and figure as the Monk in "Aurelio and Miranda" reminded him of "ONE," to name "WHOM" would be irreverent! Kemble's secret of success lay in his assiduity. In studying the part of the Stranger he neglected, for weeks, that for which he was distinguished,—neatness of costume. Whatever part he had to play, he acted it as if it were the most important in the piece. Pitt, on seeing him in Rolla, said, "there is the noblest actor I ever beheld!"

I have heard eye-witnesses describe his Octavian, as a heart-dissolving display, and yet he could win a laugh from the same spectators in Young Marlow, and shake their very hearts again in that mournful Penruddock, his finest effort in comedy; but in comedy full of tragic echoes. Next to Penruddock, Boaden classes his Manly; I have heard that parts of his Lord Townly surpassed them both. There the dignity and gravity were of a quality quite natural to him. His Hotspur had but one fault, that of being incorrectly dressed. In Roman parts, and in the Roman costume, he seemed to the manner born. His Coriolanus

and Hamlet are the characters the most associated with his name. Nevertheless, I do not discern any great respect, on Kemble's part, for Shakspeare, in his revival of any of the plays of the national poet. The revival of Coriolanus was a mixture of Thomson and Shakspeare's tragedies, with five of the best scenes in the latter omitted, and what was judicious in the former, marred. Then, again, in that matter of Ireland's forgery of "Vortigern," as Shakspeare's, it is not clear what opinion Kemble held of it previous to the night of its performance. Mrs. Siddons declined to play Edmunda; but Kemble's resolving to play the principal character, would seem to indicate that he had no opinion, and was willing to leave the verdict to be pronounced by the public. "The representation of Ireland's tragedy," says a writer, in *Notes and Queries*, "took place on Saturday, April 2, 1796. The crowd and the rush for admittance were almost unprecedented. I do not think that twenty females were in the pit, such was the eagerness of gentlemen to gain admittance. Mr. Ireland's father, I remember, sat in the front box on the lower tier, with some friends around him. His son was behind the scenes. There was little or no disapprobation apparently shown by the audience until the commencement of the fifth act, when Mr. Kemble, it was probable, thought the deception had gone on long enough. Such, I think, was Ireland's own opinion; for in his *Confessions*, published in 1805, I find the following account of the disapproval of the audience given by himself. The conduct of Mr. Kemble was too obvious to the whole audience to need much comment. I must, however, remark, that the particular line on which Mr. Kemble laid such a peculiar stress was, in my humble opinion, the *watchword* agreed upon by the Malone faction for the general howl. The speech alluded to ran as follows; the line in italics being that so particularly noticed by Mr. Kemble:—

'Subject! to whom? To thee, O Sovereign death
Who hast for thy domain this world immense:
Churchyards and charnel-houses are thy haunts,
And hospitals thy sumptuous palaces;
And, when thou would'st be merry, thou dost choose
The gaudy chamber of a dying king.
O! then thou dost ope wide thy bony jaws.
And, with rude laughter and fantastic tricks,
Thou clapp'st thy rattling fingers to thy sides:
And when this solemn mockery is o'er,

With icy hand thou tak'st him by the feet,
And upward so; till thou dost reach the heart,
And wrap him in the cloak of 'lasting night.'

"No sooner was the above line uttered in the most sepulchral tone of voice possible, and accompanied with that peculiar emphasis which, on a subsequent occasion, so justly rendered Mr. Kemble the object of criticism (viz., on the first representation of Mr. Colman's 'Iron Chest'), than the most discordant howl echoed from the pit that ever assailed the organs of hearing. After the lapse of ten minutes the clamour subsided, when Mr. Kemble, having again obtained a hearing, instead of proceeding with the speech at the ensuing line, very politely, and in order to amuse the audience still more, re-delivered the very line above quoted with even more solemn grimace than he had in the first instance displayed."

In old characters which Kemble assumed during his proprietorship in Covent Garden, the most successful was Gloucester, in "Jane Shore," to which he gave a force and prominency which it had never previously received. His Prospero was a marvel of dignity and beautiful elocution, and his Brutus perfect in conception and execution. In judgment, he sometimes erred. He rejected Tobin's "Honeymoon," which, with Elliston as the Duke Aranza and Miss Duncan as Juliana, became one of the most popular comedies of the day. He was ready to acknowledge the sources of some of his best inspirations. His Wolsey, for instance, was one of his finest parts, but he confessed that his idea of the Cardinal was taken from West Digges. He was sensitive enough as to criticism, and when about to try Charles Surface, he wrote to Topham, "I hope you will have the goodness to *give orders to your people* to speak favourably of the Charles, as more depends on that than you can possibly be aware of." The act was facetiously characterised as "Charles's Martyrdom," rather than "Charles's Restoration," and Kemble himself used to tell a story how, when offering to make reparation to a gentleman, for some offence, committed "after dinner," the gentleman answered that a promise on Mr. Kemble's part never to play Charles Surface again, would be considered ample satisfaction. Wine is said to have always made Kemble dull, but not offensive. Kemble was lively enough to make a good repartee, when occasion offered. He was once rehearsing the song in "Cœur de Lion,"—which he used to sing to the blaring accompaniment of French horns, that his voice might be the less audible,—when

Shaw, the leader, exclaimed, "Mr. Kemble, Mr. Kemble, you really murder the time!" "Mr. Shaw," rejoined the actor, "it is better to murder Time than to be always beating him, as you are." He bore misfortune manfully. When Covent Garden, with the royal arms, which had hung on the old curtain at Lincoln's Inn Fields, was burnt down after the performance of "Pizarro," on the night of the 19th of September, 1808, he was "not *much* moved," though, in the fire, perished a large amount of valuable property. Mrs. Kemble mourned over the supposed fact that they had to begin life again, but Kemble, after long silence, burst into a rhapsody over the ancient edifice, and straightway addressed himself to the rearing of that new building which has since gone the way of most theatres. In the completion of that second playhouse on this spot, he was nobly aided by his patron, the Duke of Northumberland, who lent him £10,000, and at the dinner by which the opening was celebrated, sent the actor his bond, that he might, as a crowning effect, commit it to the flames!

Walpole thought Kemble superior to Garrick in Benedick, and to Quin in Maskwell. Kemble bore drapery with infinite grace, and expressed every feeling well, by voice, feature, and glance of the eye—though in the first, as with his brother Charles, lay his chief defect. It wanted strength. Old playgoers have told me of a grand delivery of the soliloquies in Hamlet; a mingled romance and philosophy in the whole character; an eloquent bye-play, a sweet reverence for his father, a remembrance of the *prince*, with whatever companion he might be for the moment, of a beautiful filial affection for his mother, and of one more tender which he could *not* conceal, for Ophelia. When Kemble first appeared in Hamlet, the town could not say that Henderson was excelled, but many confessed that he was equalled. That confession stirred no ill-blood between them. "I never had an opportunity," said Kemble, later, "to study any actor better than myself, except Mr. Henderson." Lord Riversdale, Bishop of Killaloe, received instruction in elocution from Kemble, and it is said from Miss O'Neill! Of the grandeur and sublimity of the passion-tossed Orestes, Kemble gave so complete a picture that it was said—by that single character alone he might have reaped immortal fame. On the other hand, his Biron was only a respectable performance; his Macbeth on a level with his Othello; his Richard and Sir Giles inferior to Cooke's, still more so to those of Edmund Kean. In comedy, generally, he was a poor actor, except in parts where

he had to exercise dignity, express pathos, or pronounce a sentiment of moral tendency. I think, in the old Roman habit he was most at his ease; there, art, I am told, seemed less, nature more. In this respect he was the reverse of Garrick, who could no more have competed with him in delineating the noble aim of the stern Coriolanus, than Kemble could have striven successfully against Garrick's Richard, or Abel Drugger. And yet all the characters originally played by him, and successfully established on the stage, are of a romantic and not a classical cast. The prating patriot Rolla, the stricken, murmuring, lost Octavian, his chivalrous Cœur de Lion, his unapproachable Penruddock, his Percy ("Castle Spectre"), his Stranger, his De l'Epée, his Reuben Glenroy (the colloquial dialogue of which character, however, was always a burthen to him), and his De Montfort, are all romantic parts, to many of which he has given permanent life; while more classical parts for which he seemed more fitted, and in plays of equal merit at least, are all forgotten. Of his Stranger, Mrs. Trench says in her Diary, "His tenderly putting away the son of his treacherous friend, and inconstant, but unhappy mistress, examining his countenance, and then exclaiming, with a voice which developed a thousand mysterious feelings, 'You are very like your mother!' was sufficient to stamp his excellence in the pathetic line of acting." The lady adds, with excellent taste and judgment, "I always saw him with pain descend to the Stranger. It was like the Genius, in the Arabian tale, going into the vase. First, it seemed so unlikely *he* should meet with such an affront; and next, the Stranger is never really dignified; and one is always in pain for him, poor gentleman!" That his sympathies were classical, may in some sort be accepted from the fact, that he began his public life in 1776 (the year of Garrick's farewell), at Wolverhampton, with Theodosius, and closed it, at Covent Garden, in 1817, with Coriolanus, when he was too old to act Volumnia's "dear boy" to Miss O'Neill. That Kemble's own departure from the stage did not, as was once expected, prove its destruction, is to be gathered from the circumstance that while his farewell performances were in progress, Sheil's tragedy of the "Apostate" was produced at the same theatre, with a cast including the names of Young, Macready, C. Kemble, and Miss O'Neill!—and Kean was then filling Drury Lane with his Richard, Shylock, and Sir Giles.

Kemble's nearest approach to a *fiasco* was on his playing Sir Edward Mortimer. The "Iron Chest" had been ill-rehearsed,

and Kemble himself was in such a suffering condition on the first night that he was taking opium pills as the curtain was rising. The piece failed, till Elliston essayed the principal part; and, on its failure, Colman published the most insulting of prefaces to the play, in which he remarked that "Frogs in a marsh, flies in a bottle, wind in a crevice, a preacher in a field, the drone of a bagpipe, all—all yielded to the inimitable and soporific monotony of Mr. Kemble!" He was announced to play Falstaff in 1815, and he rehearsed it twice, but he never hazarded himself in it. Matthews said his conception of it was good, but that he lacked physical power. A contemporary says of him, "He is not a Garrick in Richard, a Macklin in Shylock, a Barry in Othello, or a Mossop in Zanga, and adds, that "there is more *art* than *nature* in his performance; but let it be observed that our best actors have always found *stage trick* a necessary practice, and Mr. Kemble's *methodical* powers are so peculiar to himself, that every imitator (for there have been some who have endeavoured to copy his manners) has been ridiculous in the attempt." Nevertheless, there was a Kemble school, the last of whose members is Mr. Cooper, who made his first appearance in London, at the Haymarket, in 1811, and has not yet, after more than half a century of service, formally retired from the stage. Not the least merit of actors formed on the Kemble model, was distinct enunciation, and this alone, in our large theatres, was a great boon to a listening audience.

As a dramatic author, Kemble has achieved no reputation; he was only an adapter or a translator, but in both he manifested taste and ability, save when he tampered with Shakspeare, and adapted Mrs. Behn's "Rovers," under the name of "Love in many Masks," of which the critics said, that it "retained *sufficient* marks of its ancient character." His solemn farewell, on the 23rd of June, 1817, in Coriolanus, was made not too soon; his great powers had begun, after more than forty years service, to fail, and he becomingly wished, "like the great Roman i' the Capitol," that he might adjust his mantle ere he fell. The memory of that night lives in the heart of many a survivor, and it lived in that of its hero till he calmly died, after less than six years of retirement, at Lausanne, in February, 1823. The old student of Douay never formally withdrew from the Church, of which his father once destined him to be a priest, but he remained a true Catholic Christian, with a Protestant pastor for friend and counsellor, who was at his side, with a nearer and dearer friend,

when the supreme moment was at hand. Such was the man. As an actor, he lacked the versatility and perfection of Garrick and Barry; and, says Leigh Hunt, "injured what he made you feel, by the want of feeling himself."

Of Kemble's brothers, Stephen and Charles, the former was the less celebrated, but he was not without merit. The fame of his sister induced him to leave a chemist's counter for the stage, as, later in life, the reputation of the eldest brother tempted Charles to abandon the Post Office, in order to try his fortune as a player. Stephen was less fortunate than Charles. Born in 1758, on the night his mother played Anne Boleyn, he was by seventeen years the elder of the latter. His theatrical life commenced in Dublin, after an itinerant training; but there John extinguished Stephen. In 1783, he appeared at Covent Garden, as Othello, to the Desdemona of Miss Satchell, afterwards his wife; but Stephen was speedily swept from public favour by the greater merit of John. After subsequently playing old men, at the Haymarket, Stephen opened a house in Edinburgh, against Mrs. Esten at the established theatre; but he ultimately left Edinburgh with no great luck to boast of, and, after a wandering life, appeared, in 1803, at Drury Lane, as Falstaff, after the delivery by Bannister of a heavy set of jocular verses, making allusion to his obesity. He did not act it ill: but Henderson had not yet faded from the memory of play-goers, and Stephen Kemble could not attain higher rank than a place among the best of the second class of actors. Again he disappeared from the metropolis, but returned, and played a few of the parts to which he was suited, rather by his size than his merits; and in 1818, at Drury Lane, where he assumed the office of manager, opened the season by introducing his son Henry, from Bath, as Romeo. In 1819 he played Orozembo; and "therewith an end." The theatre was then let to Elliston; Henry Kemble sank from Drury to the Coburg, and Stephen withdrawing to a private life, not altogether ill provided, died in 1822.

In that last year his younger brother Charles had passed the zenith of a reputation of which his early attempts gave no promise whatever. Hard work alone made a player of him. He was but seventeen when he first acted, at Sheffield, in 1792, Orlando, in "As You Like It." He began with Shakspeare, and he ended with him; his farewell being in Benedick, at Covent Garden, in 1836. On both occasions he played the part of a lover, and at the end of forty years he probably played it with more grace, ten-

derness, ardour, and spirit, than when he began. There was much judgment in selecting Malcolm for his first appearance in London on the 21st of April, 1794, (on the opening of New Drury Lane Theatre, the house built by Holland, and burnt in 1809,) to the Macbeth and Lady Macbeth of John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. He had little in his favour but good intentions. He was awkward in action, weak in voice, and ungraceful in deportment. The weakness of voice he never got over. It did not arise from the asthmatic cough which distressed his brother, but from debility of the organ, and this weakness always marred parts in which he was called upon for the expression of energetic passion. Gradually, Charles Kemble became one of the most graceful and refined of actors. He was enabled to seize on a domain of comedy which his brother and sister could never enter with safety to their fame. In his hands, secondary parts soon assumed a more than ordinary importance from the finish with which he acted them. His Laertes was as carefully played as Hamlet, and there was no other Cassio but his while he lived, nor any Falconbridge then, or since, that could compare with his; and in Macduff, Charles Kemble had no rival. In the tender or witty lover, the heroic soldier, and the rake, who is nevertheless a gentleman, he was the most distinguished player of his time. Of all the characters he originated, that of Guido, in Barry Cornwall's "Mirandola," was, perhaps, his most successful essay; but whatever be the character he represented, I find critics complaining of a certain languor, and now and then a partial loss of voice, after it had been much exercised, which interfered with the completeness of the representation.

Charles Kemble's Hamlet was fine in conception, but inferior in execution to his brother's. Such, at least, was the judgment delivered by Mrs. Siddons. "I think," says Mrs. F. Kemble, "that it is impossible to conceive Hamlet more truly, or execute it more exquisitely than my father does." That it was finely conceived, yet weaker in every point than Young's, I can well remember. In tragic parts there was a certain measured, however musical enunciation, of which Charles Kemble never got rid, and in the play of the features, the actor, and not the man represented, was ever present. This was particularly the case in Hamlet, in which his assumed seriousness rendered his long face so much longer in appearance than ordinary, that in the rebuke to his mother his eyebrows seemed to go up into his hair, and his chin down into his waistcoat! That his voice ill fitted him for

passionate, tragic heroes they will recollect who can recall to mind his Pierre and that of Young! Charles Kemble looked the part to perfection, and dressed it with the taste of a gentleman and an artist. Nothing could be finer, more gallant, more easy and graceful, than his entry; but he had scarcely got through "How fares the honest partner of my heart?" than the *pipe* raised a smile; it was so unlike the full, round, hearty, resonant tone in which Young put the query, and indeed played the part. Nor was Charles Kemble invariably successful in all the comic parts he assumed. His Falstaff I would willingly forget. When Ward, as the Prince, exclaimed "Peace, chewet, peace!" the command seemed very well timed. But his Mercutio! In that he walked, spoke, looked, fought, and died like a gentleman, as Walter Lacy does, his worthy successor, but not imitator in this part. In Young Mirabel, in the "Inconstant," his spirits sometimes overcame his judgment. In the last scene, when he is saved by the arrival of the "Red Burgundy," he leaped into the air like a man who is shot, and snapping his fingers, danced about the stage in a very ecstasy of delirium, too great, I thought, for a brave young fellow extricated from an awful scrape. In his Mirabel the delighted audience saw no fault; and who ever did in his Benedick? His accomplished wife, Maria Theresa De Camp was one year his junior; and, like himself, was born in the purple. Miss De Camp, or Miss De Fleury, was a Viennese by birth. Her family belonged to the ballet and the orchestra, and she herself, at six years of age, was dancing Cupid in Noverre's ballets at the London Opera House; and, ultimately, was a leading young lady in those at the Circus, the late Royal Surrey. From the sawdust of the Transpontine Theatre she was transferred to figure in similar pieces, at Colman's house in the Haymarket.

She was reserved, however, for better things: but Miss De Camp was not to attain them without study: she had to learn English, (to speak and to read it,) music, and other accomplishments. By a genius all this may be speedily effected; and Miss De Camp, in the season of 1786-7, appeared at Drury Lane as Julia, in "Richard Cœur de Lion," her future brother-in-law playing the King. At this time she was scarcely in her teens; but she was full of such promise, that she bade adieu for ever to ballet and the sawdust of the Royal Circus, and henceforth, and for upwards of thirty years, belonged to the regular drama. A score of years was to elapse before she was to change her name; but long

previously she had made that first name distinguished in theatrical annals. She had exhibited unusual merit in singing and acting Macheath to the Polly of Charles Bannister, and the Lucy of Johnstone; and she created characters with which her name is closely associated in the memory of play-goers or play-readers. She was the original Morgiana in the "Forty Thieves." And while the glory she derived from this last performance was still at its brightest, Miss De Camp in 1806 married Mr. Charles Kemble, some rather tempestuous wooing, for which he rendered public apology, not impeding the match. In the year of her marriage Mrs. C. Kemble joined the Covent Garden Company, and on making her appearance as Maria in the "Citizen," she was congratulated, on the part of the audience, by three distinct rounds of applause. Between this period, and 1819, when she withdrew from the stage, she created two parts in which she has had no successor, Edmund in the "Blind Boy," and Lady Elizabeth Freelove in "A Day after the Wedding;" and, in the last year of her acting, Madge Wildfire in the "Heart of Mid Lothian." Ten years later, Mrs. Charles Kemble returned to the stage (October 5, 1829), to do for her daughter what Mrs. Pritchard, on a like occasion, had done for her's, namely, as Lady Capulet, introduce the young *debutante* as Juliet. This one service rendered, Mrs. Charles Kemble finally withdrew. In sprightly parts, in genteel comedy, in all chambermaids, in melodramatic characters, especially where pantomimic action was needed, she was excellent. Genest remarks, that "no person understood the business of the stage better; no person had more industry; at one time she nearly lived in Drury Lane Theatre. The reason of her not being engaged after 1819, is said to have been that she wanted to play the young parts, for which her time of life, and her figure (for she had grown fat) had disqualified her; whereas had she been contented to have played Mrs. Oakley, Mrs. Candour, Flippanti, and many other characters of importance, which were not unsuitable to her personal appearance, it would have been greatly to her own advantage, and the satisfaction of the public." Charles remained on the stage till December, 1836, but, he returned for a few nights, a year or two later, when he went through a series of his most celebrated parts, for the especial gratification of the Duchess of Kent and the Princess Victoria, and for the gratification of the public generally. Occasionally he re-appeared as a "Reader," in which vocation, his refined taste, his judgment, and his graceful elocution, were mani-

fest to the last. Mr. and Mrs Charles Kemble added something to our dramatic literature; the lady's contributions were, "A Day after the Wedding," and "First Faults." Charles Kemble's the "Point of Honour," "Plot and Counterplot," and the "Wanderer;" the first two being translations from the French, and the third from the German. In his later days Charles Kemble was afflicted with deafness, an affliction which gave him a look of fixed melancholy. Rogers has left in his *Table Talk* some record of the Kembles, from which we learn that Mrs. Siddons, to whom he had been telling an anecdote showing that, when Lawrence gained a medal at the Society of Arts, his brothers and sisters were jealous of him—remarked:—"Alas! after *I* became celebrated, none of my sisters loved me as they did before!" And then, when a grand public dinner was given to John Kemble on his quitting the stage, the great actress said to the poet, "Well, perhaps, in the next world women will be more valued than they are in this." "She alluded," says Rogers, "to the comparatively little sensation which had been produced by her own retirement from the boards; and doubtless she was a far, far greater performer than John Kemble."

When competitors crossed her own path, Mrs. Siddons unfairly remarked that the public were fond of setting up new idols, in order to mortify their old favourites. She had herself, she said, been three times threatened with eclipse; first, by means of Miss Brunton (afterwards Lady Craven); next, by means of Miss Smith (Mrs. Bartley); and lastly, by means of Miss O'Neill—"nevertheless," she said, "I am not yet extinguished." She then stood, however, with regard to Miss O'Neill, exactly as Mrs. Crawford had stood with respect to herself, the younger actress carried away the hearts, the older lived respected in the memories of the audience. But over audiences, Mrs. Siddons had, in her day, reigned supreme; and that should have been enough for one whom Combes remembered to have seen, "when a very young woman, standing by the side of her father's stage, and knocking a pair of snuffers against a candlestick, to imitate the sound of a windmill, during the representation of some harlequinade." Yet, when she had departed from the scene of her glory, the remembrance of that glory did not suffice her. When Rogers was sitting with her, of an afternoon, she would say, "Oh, dear! this is the time I used to be thinking of going to the theatre; first came the pleasure of dressing for my part; and then the pleasure of acting it; but that is all over now." This was the natural wail of an

active spirit forced to be at rest. There was less dignity in the retirement of John Kemble, if what Rogers tell us be true, that, "when Kemble was living at Lausanne, he was jealous of Mont Blanc; and he disliked to hear people always asking, 'How does Mont Blanc look this morning?'"

The two greatest rivalries that John Kemble had to endure, before the final one, in which Kean triumphed, emanated from two very different persons—George Frederick Cooke and Master Betty. The success of both, marks periods in stage history, and demands brief notice here.

CHAPTER XLVI.

GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE.

About the time when Garrick was reluctantly bidding farewell to his home on the stage, at Drury Lane, a hopeful youth, of twenty years of age, born no one can well tell where, but it is said, in a barrack, of an English sergeant and a Scottish mother, was making his first grasp at the dramatic laurel, in the little town of Brentford. With the exception of a passing appearance at the Haymarket, for a benefit, in 1778, as Castalio, when London was recognising in Henderson, the true successor of Garrick, the town knew nothing of this ambitious youth for more than twenty years; then he came to Covent Garden to dethrone John Kemble; and he disquieted that actor for awhile. In ten years more, his English race was done, and while Kemble was beginning the splendid evening of his career, Cooke passed over to America, prematurely ending his course, in disgrace and ruin, and occupying a grave which a civilized Yankee speedily dishonoured.

If Cooke was an Irishman, it was by accident. He was certainly educated in England; and he early acquired, by reading Otway and seeing Vanbrugh, a taste for the drama. In school theatricals, he made his Horatio outshine the Hamlet of the night; and his Lucia,—though the boy cried at having to play a part in petticoats,—win more applause than his school-fellow's Cato. School-time over, the wayward boy went to sea, and came back with small liking for the vocation; turned *to* "business," only to turn *from* it in disgust; inherited some property, and swiftly spent it; and then we find him in that inn-yard at Brentford, enrolled among strollers, and playing Dumont in "Jane Shore," to the great delight of the upper servants from Kew, Gunnersbury, and parts adjacent, sent thither to represent

their masters, who had not the "particular desire" to see the play, for which the bills gave them credit.

The murmur of London approval, awarded to his Castalio, was the delicious magic which drew him for ever within the charmed circle of the actors, and George Frederick passed through all the heavy trials through which most of the vocation have to pass. He strolled through villages, thence to provincial towns, and, when, in 1786, he played Baldwin to the Isabella of Mrs. Siddons, that lady must have been compelled to confess, that there was a dramatic genius who, at least, approached the excellence of her brother. From York, after more probation, Cooke went over to Dublin, where he acted well, drank hard, and lost himself, in one of his wild fits, by enlisting. Fancy the proud and maddened George Frederick doing barrack scullery-work, and worse!—he who had played the Moor in presence of a vice-regal court! If his friends had not purchased his discharge, Miss Campion would certainly soon have heard that her Othello had hanged himself. The genius who would not be a soldier, though born in a barrack, found an asylum in the Manchester theatre; and subsequently Dublin welcomed him back to its well-trod stage. There, he and John Kemble met for the first time.

John took the lead, George Frederick played Ghost to Kemble's Hamlet, Henry to his Richard, Edmund to his Lear, and a similar disposition of characters. Kemble complained of being disturbed by Mr. Cooke's tipsily defective memory. George Frederick was stirred to anger and prophecy. "I won't have your faults fathered upon me," he cried, "and hark ye, Black Jack,—hang me if I don't make you tremble in your pumps one day yet." He kept his word. On the 31st of October, 1801, he acted Richard, at Covent Garden, and Kemble was present to see how Cooke would realize his promise. Kemble had played Richard himself that season at Drury Lane. I fancy he was satisfied that in the new and well-trained actor there was a dangerous rival. Kemble acted Shylock and one or two other characters against him. In Cooke's first season at the Garden, he played Richard upwards of a score of times. Shylock, Iago, and Kitely, he acted each ten times. Macbeth, seven; Sir Giles Overreach, five; the Stranger, twice; and Sir Archy Macsarcasm, several times. Of his first reception in Richard, Cooke speaks, as being flattering, encouraging, indulgent, and warm, throughout the play and at the conclusion. Cooke was not blinded by this triumphant season. Long after, he said, when referring to having

played with and also against John Kemble: "He is an *actor*. He is my superior, though they did not think so in London. I acknowledge it!" Kemble, however, was not superior to Cooke in all his characters. In the first season of their opposition, Kemble gave up Richard, but in Macbeth, he remained unapproachable by Cooke, who, in his turn, set all competition at defiance, in his Iago, in which, says Dunlap, "the quickness of his action, and the strong natural expression of feeling, which were so peculiarly his own, identified him with the character." In Kitely, his remembrance of Garrick, confessedly served him well. In Sir Giles, he excelled Kemble; but the Stranger was speedily given up by Cooke, and it remained one of his rival's glories to the last. Cooke's general success, the position he had attained, and the prospect before him, steadied his mind, strengthened his good purposes, made him master of himself under a healthy stimulus, careful of his reputation, and strict in performing his duties. Consequently, on the night he was announced to appear, to open his second season of anticipated triumph,—September 14th, 1801, —as Richard, a crowded audience had collected about the doors, to welcome him, as early as four o'clock. At that hour no one could tell where he was, and a bill was issued, stating that it was apprehended some accident had happened to Mr. Cooke; and the play was changed to "Lovers' Vows." In five weeks, the truant turned up, played magnificently, and was forgiven. He could exact forgiveness by his romantic statements made to an audience. He would attribute absence or confusion, to severe domestic affliction, to loss of a dear child, or of property, or to any great grief which had not fallen on him, though he could shed tears over it, and thereby show how low was his sense of morality.

During Cooke's truant time, young Henry Siddons made his first appearance at Covent Garden, but the Charter-house student would have done better if he had accepted the vocation to which his mother would have called him,—the Church. Cooke's criticism on his own performance was, that having acted all the Falstaffs, he had never been able to come up to his own ideas in any of them. His great failure was Hamlet, in which even young Siddons excelled him, but a triumph which compensated for any such failures, and for numerous offences given to the audience,—made victims of his "sudden indispositions,"—was found in Sir Pertinax, in which, even by many of those who remembered Macklin, he was held to have fully equalled the great and venerable original.

In the season of 1802, Cooke's indispositions became more frequently sudden, and lasted longer. On the days of his acting-nights, his manager was accustomed to entertain him, supervise his supply of liquor, and carry him to the theatre; but George Frederick often escaped, and could not be traced. Perhaps, his Peregrine, in "John Bull," of which he was the original representative, would have been a more finished performance but for the author's indiscretion. "We got 'John Bull' from Colman," said Cooke to Dunlap, "act by act, as he wanted money, but the last act did not come, and Harris refused to make any further advances. At last, necessity drove Colman to make a finish, and he wrote the fifth act, in one night, on separate pieces of paper. As he filled one piece after the other, he threw them on the floor, and, finishing his liquor, went to bed. Harris, who impatiently expected the dénoûement of the play, according to promise, sent Fawcett to Colman, who found him in bed. By his direction, Fawcett picked up the scraps, and brought them to the theatre."

In the season of 1803-4, Kemble played in several pieces with Cooke. They were thus brought into direct contrast. Kemble acted Richmond to Cooke's Richard; Old Norval to his Glenalvon; Rolla to his Pizarro; Beverley to his Stukeley: Horatio to his Sciolto,—Charles Kemble playing Lothario, and Mrs. Siddons Calista,—such a cast as the "Fair Penitent" had not had for many years! John Kemble further played Jaffier to Cooke's Pierre; Antonio to his Shylock; the Duke, in "Measure for Measure," to his Angelo; Macbeth to his Macduff; Henry IV. to Cooke's Falstaff; Othello to his Iago; King John, with Cooke as Hubert, and Charles Kemble as Falconbridge; Mrs. Siddons being the Constance; Kemble also played Ford to Cooke's Falstaff, and Hamlet to Cooke's Ghost; and, in a subsequent season, Posthumus to his Iachimo, with some other parts, which must have recalled the old excitement of the times of Garrick and Quin, but that audiences were going mad about Master Betty, to the Rolla of which little and clever gentleman, George Frederick, needy and careless, was compelled to play Pizarro!

For a few seasons more he kept his ground with difficulty. He did not play many parts well, it has been said, but those he did play well, he played better than anybody else. But dissipation marred his vast powers even in these; and recklessness reduced this genius to penury. After receiving £400 in bank-notes, the proceeds of a benefit at Manchester, he thrust the whole into the fire, in order to put himself on a level to fight a man, in a pot-

house row, who had said that Cooke provoked him to battle, only becuause *he* was a rich man and the other poor! On his very follies men built up wit. "I am not at all myself, this morning," he once said to Fawcett, who replied, "I am glad to hear it, for whoever *else* you may be, *you* must profit by the bargain." And, again, on the cut of his coat being ridiculed, he said it was his tailor's fault. "Aye!" replied Munden, "and his misfortune, too."

It is not surprising that prison locks kept such a man from his duties in the playhouse; but the public always welcomed the prodigal on his return. When he re-appeared at Covent Garden, as Sir Pertinax, in March, 1808, after a long confinement, it was to "the greatest money-house, one excepted, ever known at that theatre. Never was a performer received in a more flattering or gratifying manner." But he slipped back into bad habits, was often forgetful of his parts, and was sometimes speechless; yet he was generally able to keep up the Scottish dialect, if he could speak at all, and his part required it. Once, when playing Sir Archy Macsarcasm, he forgot his name, called himself *Sir Pertinax Macsycophant*, and was corrected by a purist in the gallery. Cooke looked up, and happily enough remarked, "*Eets aw ane blude!*" He was hardly less happy, when, for some offence given by him, on the stage, at Liverpool, he was called on to offer an apology to the audience. Liverpool merchants had fattened, then, by the trade in human flesh. "Apology! from George Frederick Cooke!" he cried; "take it from this remark: There's not a brick in your infernal town which is not cemented by the blood of a slave!"

The American Cooper found him in the lowest of the slums of Liverpool, and tempted, or kidnapped, him to America, from whence this compound of genius and blackguard never returned. On one of his early appearances, in New York, he is said, being elated, to have refused to act till the orchestra had played "God Save the King;" and then he insisted, with tipsy gravity, that the audience should be "up-standing." In seventeen nights following the 21st of November, 1810, when he first appeared in New York, as Richard, the treasury was the richer by twenty-five thousand five hundred and seventy-eight dollars. He felt and expressed, however, such a contempt for the Yankee character, that New York soon deserted him, and Philadelphia paid him little or no homage. Once, he refused to act before Mr. Madison, the President, and his cabinet. He thought it would degrade

him. And yet the President was not an "obscene imbecile," nor the vice-president a drunken ruffian, nor the generals mere Indian savages, nor the clergy "war Christians," nor the ladies "hen-harriers," nor the government a "rascalry," at which all honest men stood aghast!

From among the Yankees. Cooke found, however, a lady with the old dramatic name of Behn, who became his second wife; but his condition was little improved thereby. Dr. Francis, in his *Old New York*, gives the following picture of him at this time:—"After one of those catastrophes to which I have alluded, I paid him a visit at early afternoon, the better to secure his attendance at the theatre. He was seated at his table, with many decanters, all exhausted, save two or three appropriated for candlesticks, the lights in full blaze. He had not rested for some thirty hours or more. With much ado, aided by Price, the manager, he was persuaded to enter the carriage waiting at the door to take him to the playhouse. It was a stormy night. He repaired to the green-room, and was soon ready. Price saw he was the worse from excess, but the public were not to be disappointed. 'Let him,' says the manager, 'only get before the lights and the receipts are secure.' Within the wonted time Cooke entered on his part, the Duke of Gloster. The public were unanimous in their decision, that he never performed with greater satisfaction. . . . . Hardly twenty-four hours after this memorable night, he scattered some 400 dollars among the needy and the solicitous, and took refreshment in a sound sleep. When the painter, Stuart, was engaged with the delineation of his noble features, he chose to select those hours for sleeping; yet the great artist triumphed, and satisfied his liberal patron, Price. Stuart proved a match for him, by occasionally raising the lid of his eye. On the night of his benefit, the most memorable of his career in New York, with a house crowded to suffocation, he abused public confidence, and had nothing to say but that Cato had full right to take liberty with his senate."

In this strange being, there were two phases of character that are beyond ordinary singularity. The first was his "mental intoxication," of which he thus speaks in one of his journals: "I can imagine myself in strange situations and strange places. This humour, whatever it is, comes uninvited, but it is nevertheless easily dispelled,—at least, generally so. When it *cannot* be dispelled, it must, of course, become madness." Here was a decided perception of the way he might be going,—from physical,

through mental, intoxication, to the mad-house! His common sense is another phase in the character of this great actor, who manifested so little for his own profit. He was the guardian of female morals against the perils of contemporary literature! "In my humble opinion," he says, "a licencer is as necessary for a circulating library, as for dramatic productions intended for representation." Cooke may be said to have been dying, from the day he landed in the States. His vigorous constitution only slowly gave way. It was difficult for him to destroy that; for in occasional rests he gave it, when he sat down to write on religion, philosophy, ideas for improving society, and diatribes against drinking, in his diary, his constitution recovered all its vigour, and started refreshed for a new struggle against drunkenness and death. The former, however, gave it a mortal fall, in July, 1812, when Death grasped his victim, for ever. Cooke was taken ill, while playing Sir Giles Overreach, at Boston, on the 31st of the above month. He went home, irrecoverably stricken, met his fate with decency, and calmly breathed his last in the following September, in full possession of his mental faculties, to the supreme moment. He was buried in the "strangers' vault," of St. Paul's church, New York, with much ceremony, on the part of friends who admired his genius, and mutilated his body!

Cooke was of the middle size, strongly and stoutly built, with a face capable of every expression, and an eye which was as grand an interpreter of the poets, as the tongue. He was free from gesticulation and all trickery, but he lacked the grace and refinement of less accomplished actors. In soliloquies, he recognised no audience; and his hearers seemed to detect his thoughts by some other process than listening to his words. Kemble excelled Cooke in nobleness of presence, but Cooke surpassed the other in power and compass of voice. Off the stage, during the progress of a play, he did not, like Betterton, preserve the character he was acting; nor like Young, tell gay stories, and even sing gay songs; but he loved to have the strictest order and decorum,—he, the most drunken player that had glorified the stage, since the days of George Powell!

When Edmund Kean was in America, Bishop Hobart gave permission for the removal of Cooke's body, from the "strangers' vault," to the public burial ground of the parish, where Kean was about to erect a monument to the memory of his ill-fated predecessor. On that occasion, "tears fell from Kean's eyes in abundance," says Dr. Francis; but those eyes would have flashed

lightning, had Kean been aware that there was a headless trunk within the coffin; and that the head was in the possession of Dr. Francis! To what purposes it has been turned, this gentleman may tell in his own words.

"A theatrical benefit had been announced at the Park, and 'Hamlet,' the play. A subordinate of the theatre at a late hour hurried to my office, for a skull. I was compelled to loan the head of my old friend, George Frederick Cooke. 'Alas, poor Yorick!' It was returned in the morning; but on the ensuing evening, at a meeting of the Cooper Club, the circumstance becoming known to several of the members, and a general desire being expressed to investigate, phrenologically, the head of the great tragedian, the article was again released from its privacy, when Daniel Webster, Henry Wheaton, and many others who enriched the meeting of that night, applied the principles of craniological science to the interesting specimen before them . . . . Cooper felt as a coadjutor of Albinus, and Cooke enacted a great part that night." If Cooke could have spoken his great part, he would assuredly have added something strong to his comments on what he used to call the "civilization of Yankee-doodle."

The monument, erected by Edmund Kean, consists of a pedestal, surmounted by an urn, with this inscription:—"Erected to the memory of George Frederick Cooke, by Edmund Kean, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1821;" and, beneath, this not choice, nor accurate distich:

> "Three kingdoms claim his birth.
> Both hemispheres pronounce his worth!"

Below this superscription lies all that has not been stolen of what was mortal, of one among the greatest and the least of British actors. During his career, flourished and passed into private life a boy, who still survives, rich with the fortune rapidly acquired in those old play-going days,—Master Betty.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MASTER BETTY.

William Henry West Betty was born at Shrewsbury, in 1791,—a Shropshire boy, but of Irish decent. His father, a man of independent means, taught him fencing and elocution, and was surprised to find that a histrionic affection came of this double instruction. "I shall certainly die, if I do not become an actor!" said the boy, when residing near Belfast, and after seeing Mrs. Siddons as Elvira, in "Pizarro." He was then ten years old; and was a boy with a will and decision of character. In his twelfth year, he made his first appearance at Belfast, on the 11th of August, 1803, as Osmyn, in "Zara" The judgment of the Irish manager, Atkins, was that he was an "Infant Garrick." Master Betty also played Douglas, Rolla, and Romeo; and he went up to Dublin, in November, with the testimony of the Belfast ladies that he was "a darling." In the Irish capital, he acted Douglas, Frederick, Prince Arthur, Romeo, Tancred, and Hamlet. As he is said to have learned and played the last part within three days, I have small respect for his precocious cleverness, and do not wonder that the Dublin wits showered epigrams upon him.

"The public are respectfully informed that no person coming from the theatre will be stopt till after eleven o'clock." Such was the curious announcement on the Irish play-bill which invited the public to go and see Master Betty, and advised them to get home early, if they would not be taken for traitors. Those days were the days of United Irishmen, when Ireland was divided into factions, and Dublin not quite at unity as to Master Betty's merits. The majority, however, worshipped the idol, before which Cork, Waterford, Londonderry, and other cities, bowed the knee. The popular acclaim wafted him to Scotland. In

Glasgow, there was one individual who was not mad, and *would* criticise; but, in return for "a severe philippic" administered by him, the wretch "was compelled to leave the city!" In Edinburgh, Master Betty found more dotage than he had left in Glasgow. It was not merely that duchesses and countesses caressed the boy, but there was Home himself, at the representation of his own "Douglas," blubbering in the boxes, and protesting that never till then had young Norval been acted as he had conceived it! And he had seen West Digges, the original, in Edinburgh; and Spranger Barry, the original, in London! Critics said the Infant Roscius excelled Kemble; and Lords of the Court of Session presented him with books, and gave him old men's blessings! "He sets the city in flames," said one critic; and another, anticipating the theory of M. de Frariere, in his *Education Anterieure*, said, "that the boy's pleasing movements of perfect and refined nature had been incorporated with his frame, previous to his birth." Birmingham next took him up, and the English town confirmed the verdicts of Ireland and Scotland. Miss Smith (afterwards Mrs. Bartley) played mother to him one night, and maid beloved the next. Even miners and mill-folk donned their best clothes, in the middle of the week, and went to see Master Betty, and at the close of a dozen performances, the Infant Roscius was celebrated by a Bromwicham poet as having crushed the pride of all his predecessors, and being "Cooke, Kemble, Holman, Garrick, all in one!"

"Theatrical coach to carry six insides, to see the young Roscius," was the placard on many a vehicle which carried an impatient public from Doncaster Races to Sheffield, where crowds of amateurs from London fought with the country-folk for admission to the theatre, and a poetic Templar, rather loose in his Italian, remarked in a long poem in his praise:

> "Would Sculpture form Apollo Belvidere,
> She need not roam to France, the model's here!"

Liverpool, Chester, Manchester, Stockport, all caught the frenzy, and adored the boy,—to whom Charles Young played subordinate parts! Occasionally, Master Betty acted twice in the same day, and he netted about £500 a week! Royal dukes expressed their delight in him, grateful managers loaded him with silver cups, and John Kemble wrote to Mr. Betty *père*, to express the happiness he and Mr. Harris would have in welcoming the tenth Won-

der to Covent Garden Theatre,—at £50 per night and half a clear benefit!

Accordingly, on Saturday, the 1st of December, 1804, at ten in the morning, gentlemen were "parading" under the Pizza. By two o'clock serried crowds possessed every avenue, and when the doors were opened, there was a rush which, ultimately, cost some persons their lives. "The pit was two-thirds filled from the boxes. Gentlemen who knew that there were no places untaken in the boxes, and who could not get up the pit avenues, paid for admission into the lower boxes, and poured from them into the pit, in twenties and thirties at a time." Contemporary accounts speak in detail of the terrible sufferings not only of women, but men. "The ladies in one or two boxes were occupied almost the whole night in fanning the gentlemen who were beneath them in the pit. . . Upwards of twenty gentlemen who had fainted, were dragged up into the boxes. . . Several more raised their hands as if in the act of supplication for mercy and pity." As for the play, "Barbarossa," the sensible public would have none of it before the scene in the second act, in which Selim (Master Betty) first makes his appearance. When that arrived, he was not disturbed by the uproar of applause which welcomed him; and he answered the universal expectation. "Whenever he wished to produce a great effect he never failed." He was found to be "a perfect master." His whisper was "heard in every part of the house," says a newspaper critic; "there is something in it like the under-notes of the Kembles; but it has nothing sepulchral in it. . . The oldest actor is not equal to him, he never loses sight of the scene. . . His judgment seems to be extremely correct. . . Nature has endowed him with genius which we shall vainly attempt to find in any of the actors of the present day;"—after which last sweeping judgment comes the qualifying line, "If he be not even now the first, he is in the very first line; and he will soon leave every other actor of the present day at an immeasurable distance behind him." The critics evidently had small confidence in their own judgments, but princes led the applause; their Majesties were charmed with their new "servant;" royalty received him in its London palace, and to the Count d'Artois (future King of France) and an august party at Lady Percival's, the small-eyed and plump faced boy shook his luxuriant auburn curls and acted Zaphna, in French.—"I went to see the young Roscius with an unprejudiced mind, or rather, perhaps, with the opinion you seemed to have formed of him; and left the

theatre in the highest admiration of his wonderful talents. As I scarcely remember Garrick, I may say, (though there be doubtless room for improvement), I never saw such fine acting; and yet the poor boy's voice was that night a good deal affected by a cold. I would willingly pay a guinea for a place on each night of his appearing in a new character." So wrote Lord Henley, to Lord Auckland, in December, 1804. The philosophers went as mad as the "quality" and critics. *Quid noster Roscius egit* was given by Cambridge University as the subject for Sir William Brown's prize-medal. Old "Gentleman Smith," the original Charles Surface, came up from Bury St. Edmunds, and presented young Betty with a seal bearing the likeness of Garrick, and which Garrick, in his last illness, had charged him to keep only till he should "meet with a player who acted from NATURE and from FEELING." Having found such actor, Smith consigned to him the keeping of the precious relic! Then, if the overtaxed boy fell ill, as he did more than once, the public forgot the general social distress, the threats of invasion, war abroad, and sedition at home, and evinced such painful anxiety, that bulletins were daily issued, as though the lad were king-regnant or heir-apparent. Subsequently, Drury Lane and Covent Garden shared him between them. In twenty-three nights, at the former house, he drew above £12,000, and this double work so doubled his popularity, that on one night, having to play Hamlet, the House of Commons, on a motion by Pitt, adjourned, and went down to the theatre to see him! This flattery from the whole Senate was capped by that of a single legislator; Charles Fox read Zanga to the little actor, and commented on Young's tragedy, with such effect, that the young gentleman never undertook the principal character! There was some idea of raising a statue to him, and Opie *did* paint a picture in which young Roscius was represented as having drawn inspiration from the tomb of Shakspeare!

Except John Kemble, there was scarcely an actor of celebrity who did not play in the same piece with him. Suett and Joey Grimaldi, were the Gravediggers to his Hamlet. At the close of the season he passed through the provinces, triumphant, and returned to Drury Lane in 1805, to find "garlick amid the flowers," and a strong sibilant opposition, which he surmounted. He again played the round of tragic heroes and carried heaps of gold away with him to the country, where he easily earned large additions to the heap. But the London furor henceforth subsided. The provinces continued their allegiance for a year or two, but the

metropolis no longer asked for, or thought of him. His last season was at Bath, in 1808; in the July of which year he entered Christ's College, Cambridge, as a Fellow Commoner; subsequently hunted in the vicinity of the Shropshire estate, purchased for him by his father, and became Captain Betty of the North Shropshire Yeomanry Cavalry.

So ended *Master* Betty! But, in 1812, his father being dead, Mr. Betty longed again for the incense of the lamps and the dear homage of applause, and he went through a course of provincial theatres, ending with a month at Covent Garden, with questionable success. His old admirers would have it that he was the English, as he had been the Infant, Roscius; but the treasury account told another tale, and Mr. Betty could only take rank as a respectable actor. Some critics even said, after he played Hamlet, that he was the worst actor who ever came before the public (in a trial part) as a first rate performer. His name, however, was still a tower of strength beyond the metropolis; and, in county towns, the intelligent young man drew audiences still. In Edinburgh, Mr. Macready played Edward to Mr. Betty's Warwick, in which last character, after fitful appearances in the country, and acting for a single night now and then in London, as an additional attraction for a benefit, Mr. Betty took his final farewell of the stage, at Southampton, on August the 9th, 1824, being then but thirty-two years of age.

There can be no doubt of Master Betty having been the most "*promising*" young actor that ever delighted his contemporaries, and disappointed those that were to be so hereafter. His wonderful memory, his self-possession, his elegance of manner, his natural and feeling style of acting, all but his habit of dropping his *h's*, were parts of a promise of excellence. But his early audiences took these for a whole and complete performance. He was master of words but not of ideas, and in his boyhood was imperfectly educated. He could learn Hamlet in three or four days, and, no doubt, he played it prettily; but to play prettily and to act masterly, are different things. Hamlet is no matter for a boy to handle. Betterton acted it for fifty years, and, to his own mind, had not thoroughly fathomed the profoundest depths of its philosophy even then. Master Betty commenced too early to learn by rote; and the habits he then formed never permitted him to study as well as learn, by heart. The feeling and the nature, for which he was once praised, were those of a boy; they kept by him, and

they were found weak and nerveless in the man. But therewith he reaped a large fortune, and he has prudently kept that, too. May the old man long enjoy what the young boy, between natural abilities and the madness of "fashion," earned with happy facility.

There remains but one name more of exceeding greatness to be mentioned,—that of Edmund Kean; but, ere we let our curtain rise to him, I have to notice something of the manners, customs, sayings, and doings of a past time, which differed greatly from that in which Kean was reared, flourished, and fell.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

COSTUME, PROLOGUES, AND EPILOGUES, DEDICATIONS, BENEFITS, AUTHORS, AND OLD AND NEW ACTORS.

Some of the oldest of our dramatic costumes are still in existence. Several of the dresses in which the Coventry Mysteries were acted in St. Michael's Church, Coventry, are in the possession of Mr. Staunton of Warwickshire Stage dresses were intended to last. In the journals of 1723, it is said that Duncan and Julius Cæsar, at the above date, had worn the same robes *for a century;* and it was suggested that monarchy was brought into contempt by poorly-clad representatives. They were not always ill-clad, for 1605, the "Ajax Flagellifer" of Sophocles was acted at Oxford, before king James, "with goodly antique apparel."

Betterton, in Hamlet, when he beheld his father's spirit, "turned as white as his own neckcloth," the laced kerchief then in fashion. Garrick dressed the young Dane in a court suit of black, short wig with queue and bag, buckles in the shoes, ruffles at the wrists, and flowing ends of an ample cravat hanging over his chest! Then, Woodward as Mercutio! He did not walk his native city capped, plumed, and be-mantled, according to the period, but in the dress of a rakish squire of Woodward's own days. On the top of a jaunty peruke was cocked a three-cornered hat, profusely gold-laced at the borders. Round the neck of the Veronese gentleman was negligently wound a Steinkirk cravat of muslin with *point of Flanders* ends. He wore high heels to his gold-buckled shoes. The waistcoat descended over the thighs, and into its pocket Woodward thrust one hand, as, with a finger of the other knowingly laid to his nose, he began the famous lines, "Oh! then, I see Queen Mab hath been with you!

Booth, the Cato of Queen Anne's days wore a flowered gown

and an ample wig! Garrick's Macbeth was a modern Scottish serjeant-major, his Romeo, "a beau in a new birthday embroidery." His Richard, fancifully decked, is preserved to us in Hogarth's picture; but when the King was thus attired, all the other persons of the drama wore court suits, powdered wigs, bags, cocked hats, and drawing-room swords! And yet the grandeur of the performance seems to have been in no way marred. The dress worn in 1806, by Mathews, as Old Foresight, in "Love for Love," was the very fashionable suit, worn by the graceful Wilks in that most airy of his parts, Sir Harry Wildair. The coat worn by Mrs. Woffington in the same character, was worn by Suett in his old men.

Macklin's Macbeth and Hamlet were dressed like Garrick's. John Kemble dressed the sad young Dane in a fancy suit defying chronology, a carefully curled and powdered wig, such as never sat on Scandinavian head, and a blaze of anachronisms in jewelled orders!

Originally, Kemble even acted Hamlet, with the order of the Garter beneath his knee! He also wore the riband and star, with a black velvet court-dress, diamond buckles; and his powdered hair dishevelled, in the mad scene. The Vandyke dress, with black bugles, and dark curled wig, was first worn by John Kemble during his own management of Drury Lane. In one respect, the latter actor was the exact reverse of Henderson, who was so careless in the matter of costume, that he once boasted of having played ten different characters, in one season, in the same dress! Lewis was nearly as negligent as Henderson. His Earl Percy, for instance, was a marvel of anachronism and indifference. The noble Northumbrian was attired in a light summer attire of no possible age, and suited to no possible people. His hair was flowing, but profusely powdered; and these pendant locks were prettily tied up in a cluster of light blue streamers, which his airiness made flutter in the breeze. But those were days in which everything was borne with and nothing questioned. The beautiful Mrs. Crouch, for example, acted one of the Witches in "Macbeth," in a killing, fancy hat, her hair superbly powdered, rouge laid on with delicate effect, and her whole exquisite person enveloped in a cloud of point lace and fine linen. Actresses, generally, have been as careless and charming as Mrs. Crouch. Lewis, again, as Hippolitus, attired that young man, of the era of Neptune, in knee breeches, a jaunty silk jacket, tight fitting boots, and a little court bodkin on his thigh—the thigh of the son

of Theseus! It is not desirable, however, that stage costume should observe more than a pictorial correctness; and this applies to language as well as to dress. Wycherley says, with great truth, of the poetic or dramatic peasant that his wit and his garb must be alike fitting for the country,—adding

> "Yet must his pure and unaffected thought,
> More nicely than the common swain's be wrought.
> So, with becoming art, the players dress
> In silks the shepherd and the shepherdess;
> Yet, still unchanged the form and mode remain,
> Shaped like the homely russet of the swain."

I think that the custom of noblemen presenting their cast-off court-suits to great players (Betterton played Alexander the Great in one), went out before the middle of the last century. At the age of sixty, Quin played the youthful Chamont in a long, grisly, half-powdered wig, hanging low down on each side the breast, and down the back; a heavy scarlet coat and waistcoat, trimmed with broad gold lace, black velvet breeches, a black silk neck-cloth, black stockings, a pair of square-toed shoes, with an old-fashioned pair of stone buckles, and a pair of stiff, high-topped white gloves, with a broad, old scolloped hat. It was not more absurd than the dress worn by Hale, an actor of Garrick's time, as Charles I.; viz., a full-bottomed wig of the reign of Queen Anne, of the lightest colour, and flowing over back and shoulders; a perfect "cataract peruke!" The wig worn by the acting murderer in "Hamlet," at Covent Garden, down to the period of the fire, had belonged to Charles II., who gave it to Killigrew. Quick's vest in Spado had once been James II.'s; and King Arthur's suit in "Tom Thumb," was that in which Lord Northumberland appeared as our ambassador at Venice!

The *Morning Chronicle* for November 14, 1783, assails the costumes in "Douglas." "Lord Randolph and Glenalvon were as fine as if they were designed for the soft service of Venus, and meant to be present in an Eastern ball room; and yet the whole scene of the play lies in the hardy region of the North, &c., &c. Old Norval's dress," it is added, "had not the most distant semblance of the ordinary habit of a Scotch shepherd."

Even at the beginning of this century, anachronisms still abounded; In "Henry VIII.," the bishops wore the Protestant Episcopal dress of Charles II.'s time. The heralds bore the arms of George III.; and the Yeomen of the Guard, probably from the

Tower, marched in procession with a brilliant G. R. on their inexplicable breasts.

In looking over the poetical addresses made to audiences in former days, our regret is that such abundant illustration, as they give, of life in and out of the theatre, is rendered unavailable by a licentiousness which runs through every line. It was only when the actors went to Oxford, that, in their prologues, they expressed profound respect for the audience, whose suffrage alone, it was said, made authentic wit. "Oxford's a place where wit can never starve," says Dryden. Nevertheless, the London appetite for prologue and epilogue was for many years insatiable. The public, though often insulted in both, listened eagerly; and only with reluctance saw the time arrive when the play was considered safe enough to go on without the introduction. Even when old plays were revived, the audience expected the prologue to enjoy resuscitation also.

Thomson protested against the practice of epilogue writers who scoffed at the seriousness and moral of the play. In the epilogue to "Sophonisba," *by a friend*, and spoken by Mrs. Cibber, he is thus alluded to:—

> "Our squeamish author scruples this proceeding;
> He says, it hurts sound morals and good breeding."

Thomson again protested, with good reason, and he was laughed at for it, in the epilogue to "Agamemnon," but the public sided with him, and the epilogue which ridiculed the protest and modesty of the author, was changed after the first night. The new epilogue retained his protest, and rendered him justice for recording it. And yet, in the epilogue to "Edward and Eleanora," the friend who wrote it, mocked him as a "simple soul." "Wise poets are such fools," he says! But modest Thomson would not yield to sarcasm, and in noble lines, spoken by Mrs. Cibber, as the Tragic Muse, in the epilogue to "Tancred and Sigismunda," in which she had played the heroine, he denounced the profane custom of mocking at morality, and urged the audience not to be inferior to the French in love of decency, and not to forget good impressions for some wretched jest. The old prologues and epilogues are worth reading only for their illustrations of life and manners, but, except a few by eminent poets, for no other reason. They are generally remarkable for indecency, while the dedications of dramas, by playwrights to their patrons, are as noteworthy for their fulsomeness, mendacity, and blasphemy.

Let me conclude this chapter with a word on actors' Benefits. These are of royal invention. The first was awarded by King James to Elizabeth Barry,—a tribute to her genius. The old fashion of announcing them was quaint enough. When George Powell, in April, 1712, was to play Falstaff, it was after this fashion that the *Spectator* did a good turn for its friend. "The haughty George Powell hopes all the good natured part of the town will favour him whom they applauded in Alexander, Timon, Lear, and Orestes, with their company this night, when he hazards all his heroic glory in the humbler condition of honest Jack Falstaff." I frequently meet with announcements of benefits "for some distressed actors, lately of this house;"—and, occasionally, if circumstances rendered the benefit less productive than was expected, a second is gratuitously given to make up for the deficit. Again, "For the benefit of a gentleman who has written for the stage," shows a delicate feeling for a modest, or a damned, author. And as "for sufferers from fire," "wards in Middlesex Hospital," or "for the building of churches and chapels," or for "Lying-in Hospitals," or "for the redemption of Christian slaves in Algiers," the stage was never weary of lending itself to such good purposes of relief. In 1719, Spiller advertised a performance at Lincoln's Inn Fields, "for the benefit of himself and creditors!" Theophilus Cibber was often as candid. In April, 1746, we find him,—a comedian of the first rank, thus appealing to the consideration of the public,—"As I have, in justice to my creditors, assigned over so much of my salary as reduces the remainder to a very small pittance, I very much depend on the indulgence and encouragement of the town at my benefit, whose favours shall be gratefully remembered, by their very humble servant,—Theophilus Cibber." Such an announcement was, perhaps, exceeded in singularity by Lillo's advertisement, of the performance, on the third, or author's night, of his "Elmeric," "for the benefit of my poor relations." The frankness of the avowal and the liberality suggested are social traits worth preserving.

When Yates took his benefit at Goodman's Fields, he advertised the impossibility of his calling personally on theatrical patrons in the neighbourhood, on the ground that he had got into such a strange part of the town, he could not find his way about the streets! In the same year there was an ambitious young actor at Goodman's Fields, named Goodfellow, who played Hamlet and Fribble, two of Garrick's best characters, for his benefit; for taking which he gave the singular reason, that "my friends

having expressed a great dislike to my being on the stage, I have resolved upon taking this benefit to enable me to return to my former employment." The public accordingly patronised him in order to get rid of him, and the young fellow was so grateful that he remained on the stage! In May, 1766, the profession took its first step towards providing for its poorer members, and Garrick played Kitely for the "benefit of the fund to be raised for the relief of those who, from their infirmities shall be obliged to retire from the stage." Of some of those who flourished and withdrew before the coming of Edmund Kean, it remains that brief notice should now be taken.

CHAPTER XLIX.

OLD STAGERS DEPARTING.

Of the old actors who entered on the nineteenth century, King was the first to depart. He was the original representative of Sir Peter Teazle, Lord Ogleby, Puff, and Dr. Cantwell. He began his London career at the age of eighteeen, in 1748, at Drury Lane, as the Herald in "King Lear," and in the next year Whitehead selected him to play Valerius in his "Roman Father." By 1756 he was an established favourite, and he remained on the London stage, with hard summer work during the holidays, till the 24th of May, 1802, when he took his leave in Sir Peter, to the Lady Teazle of Mrs. Jordan. At the end of upwards of half a century he withdrew, to linger four years more, a man of straitened means, one whom fondness for "play" would not at first allow to grow rich; nor, after that was accomplished, to remain so. He had "strong sense, dry humour, wit, and comic ease," and was famous "In crusty, crabbed sires, and testy lords."

Suett was to "low," what King was to "genteel," comedy; and the stage on which he first appeared in 1780 lost Dicky in 1805. He was the successor, but not the equal, of Parsons. For a comic actor he had a very tragical method of life—indicated by a bottle of rum and another of brandy being among the furniture of his breakfast table. He killed his audiences with laughter, and then went home (the tavern intervening) to bed, where his sleep was merely a night of horror caused by hideous dreams, and mental and bodily agony. Suett was tall, thin, and ungainly; addicted to grimace and interpolations; given to practical jokes on his brother actors on the stage; and original in everything, even to encountering death with a pun excited by a sign of its dread approach. Suett was one of those perversely conscientious

actors, that when he had to represent a drunkard, he took care, as Tony Lumpkin says, to be in "a concatenation accordingly."

In 1809 Lewis withdrew, in his sixty-third year. He was a Lancashire man, well descended, though a draper's son, and was educated at Armagh. He left linen-drapery for the stage, played with success in Dublin and Edinburgh, and came to Covent Garden in 1773, where, however, he did not displace Barry, as in Dublin he had vanquished Mossop. He remained till the 29th of May, 1809, when he took his farewell in the Copper Captain, the best of all his parts. In Morton and Reynold's comedies, his breathless and restless style told well; but Lewis's reputation is connected with the authors of an older period. Cooke recorded of him, that during the last thirty years of his life, he was "the unrivalled favourite of the comic muse, in all that was frolic, gay, humorous, whimsical, eccentric—and, at the same time, elegant." The same writer testifies that Lewis was "a model for making every one do his duty, by kindness and good treatment."

The greatest loss to the stage, in the early years of the present century, was in the person of Miss Pope, the real successor of Kitty Clive. She withdrew on the 26th of May, 1808, after playing Deborah Dowlas in the "Heir at Law," for the first and last time. She had played as a child when Garrick was in the fullest of his powers; won his regard, and the friendly counsel of Mrs. Clive; acted hoydens, chambermaids, and half-bred ladies, with a life, dash, and manner, free from all vulgarity; and laughed with free hilarity that begot hilarious laughing. She gave up young parts for old as age came on, and would have done it sooner, but that managers found her still attractive in the younger characters. In them she had been without a rival; and when she took to the Duennas and Mrs. Heidelbergs, she became equally without a rival. Miss Pope was as good a woman, and as well bred a lady, as she was a finished actress, and was none the less a friend of Garrick for having little theatrical controversies with him touching costume, salary, or other stage matters.

In 1761, she was Churchill's "lively Pope," a fairy of sixteen, but, in 1807, the fairy had expanded into "a bulky person, with a duplicity of chin." Out of life she faded gradually away; and one of the merriest and most vivacious actresses of her day lost, mutely, sense after sense ere she expired.

Bannister, Charles or John, father or son,—the name had a pleasant sound in our fathers' ears! The elder was a bass singer, with a voice that would crack a window pane. "*A pewtiful foice!*

your father had," said a Jew to the son; "so deep, so deep! He could go so low as a bull!" Handsome Jack played, in his salad days, when Garrick watched him, and finally, with Edmund Kean,—in whose brilliancy, as he said, he almost forgot his old master, David. John Bannister was never out of temper but once, when a critic denounced him for acting ill, on a night when he was too ill to act at all. For this malicious deed, the player recovered damages from his assailant. There was nothing he could not do *well*. There were many things he did inimitably. His Hamlet belonged to the first,—a host of comic parts to the second category. He engaged the attention of the audience, by seeming to care nothing about it. Applause interrupted his speech—never his action. In depicting heartiness, ludicrous distress, grave or affected indifference, honest bravery, insurmountable cowardice, a spirited, young, or an enfeebled old, fellow; mischievous boyishness, good-humoured vulgarity,—there was no one of his time who could equal him. In parts, combining tragedy and comedy, he was supreme. Such was his Walter; such, too, his Sheva,—though in some parts of the latter he was, perhaps, surpassed by Dowton. His features were highly expressive and flexible, and he had them in supreme command. In 1772, a namesake, but no kinsman, played Calippus, in the "Grecian Daughter." Bannister began, in 1778, at the Haymarket, as Dick, in the "Apprentice," and in the same year he appeared as Zaphna, in "Mahomet." From that year till 1815, when the curtain finally descended on him, as Walter,—a part which he created in 1793,—there was no more pleasant actor. Walpole thus writes in the year just named:—"I went on Monday evening, with Mrs. Damer, to the Little Haymarket, to see the "Children in the Wood," having heard so much of my favourite, young Bannister, in that new piece, which, by the way, is well arranged, and near being fine. He more than answered my expectation, and all I had heard of him. It was one of the most admirable performances I ever saw. His transports of despair and joy are incomparable; and his various countenances would be adapted to the pencil of Salvator Rosa. He made me shed as many tears as I suppose the old original ballad did, when I was six years old. Bannister's merit was the more striking, as, before the 'Children in the Wood,' he had been playing the sailor, in 'No Song, no Supper,' with equal nature." He left the stage with a handsome fortune, the fruits of his labour; and younger actors visited him and called him "father!"

Mrs. Jordan was another of the players whose youth belonged to the last century, but who did not retire till after Edmund Kean had given new life to the stage. She came of a lively mother, who was one of the many olive branches of a poor Welsh clergyman, from whose humble home she eloped with, and married, a gallant captain, named Bland. The new home was set up in Waterford, where Dorothy Bland was born, in 1762; and nine children were there living when the captain's friends procured the annulling of the marriage, and caused the hearth to become desolate. Dorothy was the most self-reliant of the family, for at an early age she made her way to Dublin, and under the name of Miss Francis, played everything, from sprightly girls to tragedy queens. As she produced little or no effect, she crossed the Channel to Tate Wilkinson, who inquired what she played,—tragedy, comedy, high or low, opera or farce? "I play them all;" said the young lady,—and accordingly she came out as Calista, in the "Fair Penitent:" and Lucy, in the "Virgin Unmasked." Previously to this, Wilkinson, addressing her as Miss Francis, was interrupted by her,—"my name," said she, "is Mrs. Jordan,"—her Irish manager had called her flight over the Channel, "crossing *Jordan*," and she took the name with the matronly prefix. Wilkinson looked at her, and saw no reason why she should not. Three years after, she was acting some solemn part, at York, when Gentleman Smith saw her, and forthwith recommended her to the managers of Drury, as a good *second* to Mrs. Siddons; she was engaged. But Dorothy Jordan was not going to play second to anybody; she resolved to be first in comedy, and came out in 1785, as the heroine of the "Country Girl." Her success raised her from four to eight, and then twelve pounds a week. Her next character was among her best; namely, Viola; in which the buoyant spirit, oppressed by love and grief, was finely rendered. Equal to it was her Hypolita. Rosalind, also one of her great achievements, she did not play till the next season; and Lady Contest ("Wedding Day"), which was born with, and which died with her, she did not create till the season of 1794-5. On the 4th of September, 1789, Walpole writes from Strawberry Hill to the Miss Berrys:—"The Duke of Clarence has taken Mr. Henry Hobart's house (Richmond), point blank over against Mr. Cambridge's, which will make the good woman of that mansion cross herself piteously, and stretch the throat of the blatant beast at Sudbrook (Lady Greenwich), and of all the other pious matrons *à la ronde;* for his royal high-

ness, to divert loneliness, has brought with him ——." The Duke's companion is not named; but Mrs. Jordan is supposed to be alluded to. But in September, 1791, Walpole writes to the same ladies: "Do you know that Mrs. Jordan is acknowledged to be Mrs. Ford?" They could not have known it, for Ford (the magistrate) never married her, though he had kept household with her, where all the signs of matrimony were at least abundant.

In the previous March of that year Mrs. Jordan played Cœlia, in the "Greek Slave," for her benefit. Cœlia is the mistress to a king's son; and this, coupled with a prophetic allusion in the modern epilogue, to a future condition in her life, which was not then, in the remotest degree, contemplated, is noted in Mr. Boaden's life of the actress, as a coincidence. Had she remained in strict privacy, the world would have forgiven her and a royal duke who could not marry as he pleased; but there was a public state which offended. Of a fête given at Bushey Park, in 1806, Hatsell, writing to Lord Auckland, says: "The handing Mrs. Jordan up to the upper end of the table, reminds me of a scene very similar to this, which I saw many years ago at Compiègne. I hope the consequences will not be the same; but it is more outrageous in point of defiance of the public opinion, than anything we have hitherto seen." When she, "Thalia's favourite child," said that "laughing agreed with her better than crying," and gave up tragedy, she both said and did well. John Bannister declared that "no woman ever uttered comedy like her;" and added, that "she was perfectly good-tempered, and possessed the best of hearts." She partook of the fascination of Mrs. Woffington, having a better voice, with less beauty. She surpassed Mrs. Clive and Miss Farren, in some parts, but fell short of the former in termagants, and of the latter in fine, well-bred ladies. Her voice was sweet and distinct, and she played rakes with the airiest grace and the handsomest leg that had been seen on the stage for a long time. Simple, arch, buoyant girls, with sensibility in them; or spirited, buxom, lovable women,—in these she excelled. She liked to act handsome hoydens, but not vulgar hussies. In later days, she grew fat, but still dressed as when she was young.

After a London career of little less than thirty years, long after her home with the Duke had been broken up, she suddenly left London, without any leave-taking. Her finances, once so flourishing, had become embarrassed, and the old actress with whom "laughing used to agree," withdrew without friend or child or ample means, to St. Cloud, in France, where she

assumed her third pseudonym, Mrs James. She was neglected, but she was not destitute; for, at the time of her death, in 1815, she had a balance of £100 at her bankers. She was buried without a familiar friend to follow her, and the police seized and sold her effects; "even her body-linen," says Genest, who wrote her epitaph, "was sold amidst the coarse remarks of low French-women." Her wealth had been largely lavished on the Duke of Clarence and their family: and she had calls upon it from other children. In the days when she was mistress of the house at Bushey she was often, with more or less ill humour saluted, as "Duchess." When the Duke became King, he ennobled all their children, raising the eldest of Mrs. Jordan's sons to the rank of Earl of Munster, and giving precedence to the remaining sons and daughters. Thus the blood of this actress, too, runs in our English peerage.

Robert William Elliston, like Mrs. Jordan and some others, belongs to two centuries. Born in Bloomsbury, in 1774, he had, in due time, the choice of two callings,—that of his father, a watchmaker and then farmer; or of his uncle, the Rev. Dr. Elliston, master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge—"the Church." He declined both; and having been applauded in his delivery of a thesis, at St. Paul's School, on the subject: "Nemo confidat nimium secundis," he took his own course and ran away to Bath, at sixteen, to seek an engagement on the stage. While waiting for it, he engaged himself as clerk in a lottery-office; but he eagerly changed his character, when opportunity was afforded him to act Tressel, in "Richard III." Between that and the Duke Aranza, the greatest of his parts, he had far to go; but his energies were equal to the task. The first success was small, and Elliston resorted to Tate Wilkinson, at York; where he had few opportunities of playing leading characters; and in disgust and want, he came up to London. Kemble advised him to study Romeo, and in that character he charmed a Bath audience, and laid the foundations of a future prosperity. Subsequently, after playing a few nights at Covent Garden, he appeared at the Haymarket, 1797, as Octavian and Vapour. In the first part, a rival to the throne of Kemble was recognised; in the latter, one who had gifts which were wanting in Bannister. A few nights later, he played Sir Edward Mortimer and obtained a triumph in the character in which Kemble had signally failed. From that time, the "greatness" of Elliston was an accepted matter in his lofty mind. But it suffered much mutation between

that time and 1826, when, at the end of nearly thirty years, after being proprietor of the Olympic, the Surrey, and Drury Lane, disregarding the prudence of Kemble in refraining from such an attempt, he tried Falstaff, failed thereby to recover his ruined fortunes, and sank again to the Surrey. Famous for putting the best face on everything, he comforted himself, by observing, that there he had "quite an opera pit!" For a brief period after his first appearance, Elliston was held to have excelled Kemble in truth and inspiration. Elliston's Hamlet was accounted superior in two points, the humour of the Dane and his princely youth;—but in the deep philosophy of the character, Robert William was not above respectability. And yet, by his universality of imitation, he was pronounced to be the only genius that had appeared since the days of Garrick. Perhaps he never manifested this more clearly than when, on the same night, he played Macbeth and Macheath! His soliloquies were too declamatory; he forgot that a soliloquy is not an address to the audience, but simply a vehicle to enable them to be familiar with the speaker's thoughts. His voice was here too pompously deep, and a certain catching of his breath, at the end of energetic words, sounded like sobbing. Nevertheless, it was said that Elliston was not less than Kemble in genius;—but only in manner. With study and a more heroic countenance he would have been on the same level. As it was, *in general excellence*, he may be said, when in his prime, to have been one of the greatest actors of the day. A more complete stage "gentleman," our fathers and some of ourselves never knew. He was well made; had a smile more winning and natural than any other actor; and perhaps a lover so impassioned never made suit to a lady; one so tender never watched over her; one so courteous never did her offices of courtesy; the *gentleman* was never forgotten. He was never a restless gentleman, like Lewis, nor a reserved or languid one, like Charles Kemble. All the qualities that go to the making of one were conspicuous in his Duke Aranza,—self-command, kindness, dignity, good humour, a dash of satire, and true amatory fire. The only fault of Elliston's low comedy was that he could not get rid of his gentility. The only fault of his real gentlemen was that he dressed them uniformly. Summer or winter, day or night, they were always in blue coats, white waistcoats, and white knee-breeches. Leigh Hunt loved the actor; Charles Lamb reverenced the man,—that is the actor also: for Robert William, wherever he might be, was in presence of an audience; it was his nature

to be artificial; or he was so great an artist that all things in his bearing seemed natural; that is natural to him, Robert William Elliston. When he seemed to be enacting the "humbug," he was perfectly consistent, without being the thing at all. Young Douglas Jerrold saved the Surrey with his "Black-eyed Susan," Elliston thought such service worthy of being acknowledged by the presentation of a piece of plate—on the part of the author's friends! Of Elliston's lofty remonstrances with audiences, his magnificence of matter and of manner, the awe with which he inspired the humbler actors of his company,—there are samples enough to fill a volume. The "bless you my people!" which he uttered as George IV., in the coronation procession, sprung, it was said, from a vinous excitement; but it was thoroughly in his manner. He outlived his fame, as he did his fortune; his powers to act well failed, but not his acting. He was imposing to the last; and, perhaps beyond that limit, if we might accept that gracefully fantastic sketch which Charles Lamb has addressed to his shade,—the "joyousest of once embodied spirits!" Of his lofty manner, there is, perhaps, no better sample than the following;—Sir C. Long, Sir G. Beaumont, and Sir F. Freeling, called on him, as a deputation, in 1824, touching the project of erecting a statue to Shakspeare, at Stratford, which project was patronised by George IV. After these gentlemen had spoken, Elliston remarked;—"Very well, gentlemen, leave the papers with me, and I will talk over the business with his majesty!"

There are few actors on the stage for whom Elliston had more regard than he had for the veteran, Hull. In 1807, worn out with a career which dated from 1759, heavy, useful, and intelligent Hull played his last character, the Uncle, in "George Barnwell," and he died soon after. To Hull is owing the establishment of the Covent Garden fund for the benefit of decayed actors. He proposed that sixpence in the pound should be contributed weekly from each actor's salary, and that such contributors only should have claim upon the fund. Hull never acted so well as during the Lord George Gordon riots, when a mob assembled in front of his house, roared for beer, and threatened dire insults, if the roar was unheeded. Hull appeared on the balcony, bowed thrice, assured the "ladies and gentlemen" that the beverage should be immediately forthcoming, and in the meantime asked them for "their usual indulgence."

To the last century, too, and to this, belong Holman, Munden, and Dowton. All began their careers as tragedians. Holman

was graceful, but in striving to be original fell into exaggeration, and excited laughter. His London course only lasted from 1784 to 1800, when he wandered abroad with his daughter, whose mother was a grand-daughter of the famous Lady Archibald Hamilton, the daughter of the sixth Earl of Abercorn. Thus a family, into which had married the daughter of Miss Santlow, "famed for dance," gave to the stage the Miss Holman who soon ceased to figure there. Munden was the most wonderful of grimaciers. He created laughter on the London stage, from 1790, when he appeared at Covent Garden, as Sir Francis Gripe, to 1824, when he quitted it, in good condition, financially, as Sir Robert Bramble and Dozey. It was said of him that he lost half his proper effect, by the very strength of his powers. The breadth of his acting is now hardly conceivable. On his farewell night, as he was bowing, and retiring backwards, from the audience, and wishing to avoid coming into collision with the wings, he once or twice asked in a whisper, of those standing there,—"Am I *near?*" "Very!" answered Liston, "nobody more so!"

Dowton, who came to us in 1796, as Sheva, backed by a recommendation from Cumberland, retired less richly endowed than Munden. He was most felicitous in representing testy old age, but especially where extreme rage was combined with extreme kindness of heart; and he acted the opposite of this just as felicitously,—as they will acknowledge who can remember his Sir Anthony Absolute and his Dr. Cantwell, the composure and rascality of which last are exasperating in the very memory of them.

Willy Blanchard, who opens the period commencing with the year 1800, was a mannerist, always walking the stage with his right arm bent, as if he held it in a sling. I find him often preferred to Fawcett, to whom some stern critics denied all feeling,—but they had not seen his Job Thornberry. Of his famous Caleb Quotem they would say no more than that the actor of it was a speaking harlequin.

Mathews, who first appeared in London, at the Haymarket, in 1803, as Jubal to Elliston's Sheva, was as superior to Dowton in many parts as he was to Bannister in a few. As a mimic, he has never been excelled in my remembrance. Through the whole range of lower comedy he was supreme; and his *M. Malet* showed what power this great artist could exercise over the most tender feelings. No comedian ever compelled more hearty laughter, or, when opportunity offered, as in *M. Malet*, more abundant tears.

Liston, who followed him at the Haymarket, in 1805, making his *début* as Sheepface, belonged rather to farce than comedy. Like Suett, he excited more laughter than he ever enjoyed himself. He suffered from attacks of the nerves, and, in his most humorous representations, was the more humorous from his humour always partaking of a melancholy tone. He seemed to be comic under some great calamity, and was only upheld by the hilarity of those who witnessed his sufferings, and enjoyed his comedy under difficulties. Perhaps, he had a settled disappointment in not having succeeded in tragedy; or some remorse, as though he had killed a boy when, under the name of Williams, he was usher at the Rev. Dr. Burney's, at Gosport; as he subsequently was at the old school, in St. Martin's. However this may be, he ever and anon wooed the tragic muse, with a comically serious air, and on three several occasions I trace him playing, for his benefit, Romeo, Octavian, and Baron Wildenheim! It was more absurd than Mrs. Powell's mania for acting Hamlet.

Two years later, in 1807, appeared Young, as Hamlet, at the Haymarket, and Jones, as Goldfinch, at Covent Garden. If the word "respectable" might be used in a not disparaging sense, I would apply it to Young, who was always worthy of respect,—whether he played Hamlet, Rienzi, which he originated, Falstaff, or Captain Macheath. "I cannot help thinking," says the Vicomte de Soligny, "what a sensation Young would have created, had he belonged to the French instead of to the English stage. With a voice almost as rich, powerful, and sonorous as that of Talma: action more free, flowing graceful and various; a more expressive face, and a better person, he would have been hardly second in favour and attraction, to that greatest of living actors. As it is, he admirably fills up that place in the English stage, which would have been a blank without him." He belonged to the Kemble school, but he never delivered soliloquies in that ludicrous, self-approving style which I find laughingly noticed by the critics, as a great blot in John Kemble's acting. Young had more natural feeling, and he liked to play with those who could feel in like manner,—whereas John Kemble in a love scene, was not only coldly proper himself, but insisted on the same coldness of propriety in the lady who played his mistress. As for airy Jones, I have only space to remark, that he acted rakes, at night, and taught clergymen to read their prayers decently, by day! Jones was a naturally serious man; but his combination of callings was something incongruous.

There are some ladies of the time before Edmund Kean who need record here. One is that beautiful Louisa Brunton, who, in the bud of her brilliant promise, was "erept the stage" by honourable love, and died but the other day,—Countess of Craven. The other lady is Miss Duncan, subsequently Mrs. Davison, the original Juliana to Elliston's Duke Aranza; and who, when she came upon the town as Lady Teazle, satisfied her audiences that Miss Farren had a worthy successor, and that Mrs. Jordan's possession of certain characters must thenceforth be surrendered. The dramatic life of this admirable actress commenced as soon as she could walk, and lasted almost with her natural life. With a passing notice of a survivor of all these,—coming on the stage near fourscore years ago, with the honoured name of Betterton, and dying on it, but the other day, as Mrs. Glover, I close this section of my labour. From youth to old age she acted appropriate parts, and acted all in a way that would require Cibber, Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt to describe, analyze, and grow pleasantly fanciful upon. Her life was one of self-denial, unmerited suffering, and of continual gratification to others. She was the support of three generations, the evidences of which she bore in her face,—in its beautiful expression of a felicity it knew not wherefore.

Between the commencement of the century and the night when Edmund Kean flashed upon the town, there were poets, actors, and theatrical incidents that may now be noticed.

On the 19th of September, 1808, Covent Garden was burnt down; and on the 24th of February, 1809, Drury Lane was destroyed by a fire which was caused by the carelessness of plumbers in the entrance hall. The fire spread rapidly, for the house was a mere wooden scaffolding of beams filled in with bricks, wood being, at the time, but £3 a load. The great figure of Apollo, on the roof, fell into the pit, and when the cistern melted,—that great reservoir which was to render a fire innocuous, the mass of water descended into the flames without any perceptible effect on them. Covent Garden opened at increased prices for admission on the 18th of September, 1809. The Drury Lane company opened on the 10th of October, 1812, in the present house, built by Wyatt. Mr. Whitbread, and a committee erected the house, and purchased the old patent rights, by means of a subscription of £400,000. Of this, £20,000 was paid to Sheridan, and a like sum to the other holders of the patent. The creditors of the old house took a quarter of what they claimed, in full pay-

ment: and the Duke of Bedford abandoned a claim of £12,000. Meanwhile, the religious *Eclectic Review* denounced the drama in a critique of Mr. Twiss's *Verbal Index to Shakspeare*, and clergymen denounced the gaieties of watering places as more perilous than London dissipations. The London theatrical manners are, perhaps, most strikingly illustrated by the O. P., or *old price* riots of 1809. In ten months a new Covent Garden Theatre had risen, at an expense of £150,000. Smirke had taken for his model the Acropolis of Athens, and in a narrow, flat street, had built, or hidden, his imitation of the mountain fortress of the Greeks. The house was unnecessarily large, and attendant costs so heavy, that the proprietors raised the price of admission to the boxes from 6*s.* to 7*s.*, and to the pit, from 3*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.* They had also converted space, usually allotted to the public—the third tier, in fact—into private boxes, at a rental of £300 a year for each. The pit and box public resolved to resist, and the gallery public, having a grievance in its defective construction,—the view being impeded by solid divisions, and the *run* of the seats being so steep that the occupants could see only the legs of the actors at the back of the stage,—joined the insurrection. The house opened on the 18th of September, 1809, with "Macbeth," and the "Quaker." The audience, dense and furious, sat with their backs to the stage, or stood on the seats, their hats on, to hiss and hoot the Kemble family especially; not a word of the performance was heard, for when the audience were not denouncing the Kembles, they were singing and shouting at the very tops of their then fresh voices. The upper gallery was so noisy, that soldiers, of whom 500 were in the house, rushed in to capture the rioters, who let themselves down to the lower gallery, where they were hospitably received. The sight of the soldiers increased the general exasperation. "It was a noble sight," said the *Times*, "to see so much just indignation in the public mind;" and that paper scorned the idea that the prices were to be raised, to pay for such vanities as were exhibited by Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble, who were on the stage "with clothes on their backs worth £500." Such was the first of nearly seventy nights of riot, out of which the public issued with a cry of "victory," but under a substantial defeat. In alluding to this matter, it is only necessary to notice the additions to, or the variations in, the riot,—in the conduct of which the proceedings of the first night were imitated, with this exception, that the insurrectionists did not enter the theatre till half price. First

came the introduction of placards and banners, for furnishing pins to affix one of which, in front of the boxes, a lady received an ovation; then speeches were made against the exorbitant salaries of the Kembles, and prisoners were made of the speakers; magistrates appeared on the stage to read the riot act, and the public, preparing for a rush on the stage itself, were deterred by the sudden opening of all the traps.

The proprietors then assembled partisans by distributing *orders*, and this introduced fighting. Between the combats, post-horns confounded the confusion. Pigeons were let loose, symbols that the public were pigeoned, and Kemble, compelled at last to come forward, only gave double fury to the storm, by asking "what they wanted," and, on being told, by remarking that such demand was not reasonable, and they must think better of it! Lawyers addressed the house from the boxes, encouraging the rioters, and, in allusion to the expensive engagements of Catalani and others, declared that "the British stage should not be contaminated by Italian depravity and French duplicity,"—at which declaration the modest and candid public flung some highly-seasoned aspersions at the immoral private-boxes, and retired, cheering. Watchmen's rattles and "artillery whistles" next added to the storm which tore the public ear. Placards increased. Cheers were given for the British Mrs. Dickens, and groans for Madame Catalani. The very name seemed to give birth to *cat*-calls. The actors in no way interrupted the uproar. The *Times* remarked that this was kind, as the public had so often sat without interrupting *them*. Kemble made stiff-necked speeches, and the house called him "fellow" and "vagrant," said his head was "full of *a-ches*," declared they would obey King George and not King John, and protested that they would be sung to by "native nightingales, not foreign screech-owls." The boxes looked like booths, so hung were they with placards and banners, the most loudly cheered of which former was one which announced that the salaries of the Kembles and Madame Catalani amounted, for the season, to £25,575. "Mountain and Dickens, no Cats, no Kittens!" Such is a sample of the poetry of the O. P. row,—the first series of which ended by Kemble announcing, on the sixth night, that Catalani's engagement had been cancelled, and that the house would be closed till the accounts of the proprietors had been examined by competent gentlemen. "Britons who have humbled a prince will not be conquered by a manager!"—in that form was reply made by huge placard; and, next day, the *Times*

told the public that they would not be bound by the report of the examiners of the accounts, as the people had no voice in the choice of arbitrators. The report appeared in a fortnight. In few words, it amounted to this:—If the present prices were reduced, the proprietors would lose three-fourths per cent. on their capital; but as the reporters could not even guess at the possible profits, the award was null. Meanwhile, the *Times* suggested that it would be better to reduce the exorbitant salaries. There was Mrs. Siddons with £50 per night! Why, the Lord Chief Justice sat every day in Westminster Hall, from 9 to 4, for half that sum. Caricatures represented Sarah, John, and Charles, as impudent sturdy beggars, with John in front, exclaiming, "Pity our ach-es and our want-es!"

The house re-opened on the 4th of October, with the "Beggars' Opera?" The war was resumed with increase of bitterness in feeling, and of fury in action. Jewish pugilists, under the conduct of Dutch Sam, were hired to awe and attack the dissentients. The boxer, Mendoza, distributed orders, by dozens, to people who would support the pugilists. The speech-makers were dragged away in custody, and Bow Street magistrates sat, during the performances, ready to commit them to prison-companionship with the worst class of thieves; and they lent Bow Street runners to the managers, who, armed with bludgeons, charged and overwhelmed the dauntless rioters in the pit. Dauntless, I say; for, on a succeeding night, they fell upon the Jews in great number, and celebrated their triumph in a bloody fray, by hoisting a placard with the words, "And it came to pass that John Bull smote the Israelites sore!" The incidents present themselves in such crowds, that it is hardly possible to marshal them. Among them I hear the audience called a "mob," from the stage; and I see Lord Yarmouth and Berkeley Craven fighting in the pit, on the part of the managers; and there are "middies" and "gallant tars," or people so attired, addressing the house, in nautical and nonsensical, and rather blackguard style, from upper boxes and galleries; and Brandon is rushing in to point out the rioters, and rushing out to escape from them; and gentlemen, with "O. P.," in gold, on their waiscoats, laugh at him; and there is, up above, an encounter between two boxes, the beaten party in which slide down the pillars to the tier below; and, suddenly, there is a roar of laughter at an accident on the stage. Charles Kemble, in Richmond, has stumbled in the fight, with Mr. Cooke as Richard, and fallen on his nose, and the house is as delighted as if he had

been their personal enemy! Then, the ear is gratefully sensible of a sudden *hush!* and the voices of the actors, for once, are heard; but it is not to listen to them the house is silent. A gentleman in the boxes has begun playing "*Colleen*" on the flute; the piece goes on the while, but it is only the instrumentalist who is listened to and cheered. Then, there is an especially noisy night, when rows of standing pittites are impelled one row over the other, in dire confusion. Anon, we have a night or two of empty houses; the rioters seem weary, and the managers' friends do not care to attend to see a Jubilee procession in honour of George III., in which the cars of the individualised four quarters of the globe are drawn by scene-shifters and lamplighters, in their own clothes! Because the public were thus kept away, the proprietors thought they had gained a victory, and on the first appearance of a Mrs. Clark, in the "Grecian Daughter," Cooke alluded, in a prologue, to the late "hostile rage." This little scrap of exultation stirred the house to fury again; and when Charles Kemble died as Dionysius, the half-price rioters shouted as if one of their most detested oppressors had perished.

Then came the races up and down the pit benches, while the play was in progress; and the appearance of men with huge false noses, making carnival, and of others dressed like women, who swaggered and straddled about the house, and assailed the few bold occupants of private boxes in terms of more coarseness than wit. Then, too, was introduced the famous O. P. war dance in the pit, to see which alone,—its calm beginning, its swelling into noise and rapidity, and its finale of demoniacal uproar and confusion, even Princes of the Blood visited the boxes; and having beheld the spectacle, and heard the Babel of roaring throats, laughed, and went home Not so the rioters; these sat or danced till they chose to withdraw, and then they went in procession through the streets, howling before the offices of newspapers which advocated the managerial side, and reserving their final and infernal serenade for John Kemble himself, in front of his house, No. 89, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury. The lack of wisdom on the part of the management was remarkable. The introduction of Jewish pugilists into the pit had been fruitless in good; and now I find them and other questionable looking people admitted to the boxes. Increase of exasperation followed. The rioters celebrated the jubilee of their row on its fiftieth night. Ladies who came wearing O. P. medals were cheered as if they

had been goddesses, and gentlemen, who had lost hats in the previous night's fray, came in cotton night-caps, or with kerchiefs round their heads. The pit was in a frenzy, and so was the indefatigable Brandon who captured two offenders that night, one of whom he charged with calling "Silence!" and the other with "unnaturally coughing!" The Bow Street runners also carried off many a prisoner, half-stripped and profusely bleeding, to the neighbouring tribunal; and altogether the uproar culminated on the jubilee night. The acquittal of leading rioters gave a little spirit to some after displays; but it led to a settlement. Audiences continued the affray, flung peas on the stage to bring down the dancers, and celebrated their own O. P. dance before leaving; but, at a banquet to celebrate the triumph of the cause in the acquittal of the leaders, Mr. Kemble himself appeared. Terms were there agreed upon; and on the sixty-seventh night, a banner in the house, with "We are satisfied" inscribed on it, proclaimed that all was over.

After such a fray the satisfaction was dearly bought. The 4*s.* rate of admission to the pit was diminished by 6*d.*, but the half-price remained at 2*s.* The private boxes were decreased in number, but the new price of admission to the boxes was maintained. Thus, the managers, after all, had more of the victory than the people; but it was bought dearly. In a few years the prices were lowered, but the audiences, except on particular occasions, were not numerous enough to be profitable. In fact the house was too large. The public could not hear with ease what was uttered on the stage, and spectacle was more suited to it than Shakspeare or old English comedy; and huge houses, high prices, and exorbitant salaries, soon brought the British Drama to grief in the patented theatres. The character of our stage literature half a century ago was not a pleasant one. Gifford remarked: "All the fools in the kingdom seem to have risen up and exclaimed, with one voice,—LET US WRITE FOR THE THEATRES!" The censure of Leigh Hunt is almost as strong, when he says, that being present at the comedies of Reynolds and Dibdin, he laughed heartily at the actors; but somehow or other, never recollected a word of the dialogue! Colman himself fell off from broad humour to vulgar farce; Kenney, who had been of fair promise, lost himself in old jests and trickery; Dimond was praised by the *Post;* and Reynolds confessed that he wrote poor pieces, the public approval of which, he said, was not *his* fault. Of Miss Chambers, the authoress of "Ourselves," Leigh Hunt says, that after reaching

the elevation of Sheridan, she sank, plumb down, at once, to the level of Arnold. During a season in which Reynolds produced nothing, Hunt remarked that he had *altered for* the better. The actors were superior to the authors, especially to those who wrote parts expressly for them, and composed tipsy grimaciers for Munden, and chatterers for Fawcett, and voluble gentlemen for Lewis; and, let the scene of the play be in what remote part of the world it might, always introduced an Irishman, because Johnston was there, ready and richly able, to play it. The actors thus depended on the authors, and not on themselves; and this was so much the case that Leigh Hunt remarked, that the loss of Lewis would be as rheumatism to Reynolds; and the loss of Munden, "who gives such agreeable variety of grin, would affect him little less than lock-jaw!" The old sentimental comedy was bad enough; but writers now mingled sentiment and farce together. The more loyal such writers affected to be, the more loudly their *clap-traps* were applauded. Poor Holcroft, who went through so many painful varieties of life, and who was a radical before the radical era, was one of the ablest writers of what was then called comedy, but he often failed, because of his politics, and was then taunted for his failure, and that by brother dramatists. If the Administration had hanged him, as they wished to do, in 1794, when he took his trial for high treason, and his "Love's Frailties" (from Diderot's "Père de Famille") was driven from the stage, because the author was a republican, the author of the *Road to Ruin* would not have added his adaptation of "Deaf and Dumb," and the very first of melodramas, the "Tale of Mystery," to the list of his deserved successes.

Hayley was angry when the public damned his "Eudora." Charles Lamb was present on the night that his farce, "Mr. H." was played, and he heartily joined in the shower of hisses with which it was assailed by the audience. This was in juster taste than the conduct of Godwin, who sat in the pit, stoically indifferent, in all appearance, to the indifference of the audience to his tragedy—"Antonio." As the act-drop descended, without applause or disapprobation, the author grimly observed that "such was exactly the effect he had laboured to produce." And as the piece proceeded amid similar demonstrations of contemptuous indifference, "I would not, for the world," said poor Godwin, "have the excitement set in too early."

I question, however, if anything superior to "Antonio" was produced between 1800 and the first appearance of Edmund

Kean. Soon after that event came Sheil, Maturin, Proctor, and a greater than any of them, Sheridan Knowles. Sheil wrote his tragedy, "Adelaide," expressly for Miss O'Neill; everything was sacrificed to one character,—and "Adelaide" proved a failure. The poem, however, contained promise of a poet. There was originality, at least, there was no servile imitation in the style, which was not indeed without inflation, and thundering phrases, and conceits, but there was, withal, a weakness, from which, if the writer ever extricated himself, it was only to fall into greater defect. The story is romantic, and something after the fashion of the day, in which there was an apotheosis for every romantic villain. There is more in "Adelaide" of the small sweets of Anna Matilda than of the pathos and harmony of Otway, or the vigour of Lee.

Whatever promise this first tragedy gave, there was nothing of realization in the author's next tragedy, the "Apostate." "Adelaide" was feeble; the "Apostate," in place of being stronger, was only furious. There was the bombast of Lee, but none of his brilliancy; the hideousness of his images without anything of their grand picturesqueness. The audience failed to see a second Lee or Otway in Lalor Sheil.

It has hardly fared better with Maturin, who wrote especially for Edmund Kean. The year 1816 produced this new dramatic writer, and also a new actress, Miss Somerville, who made her first appearance at Drury Lane, in Maturin's tragedy, "Bertram, or the Castle of St. Aldobrand;" which was played for the first time on May the 9th. The plot is of the romantic school. Maturin, in this tragedy, followed the German model rather than strove to imitate the touching melody of Rowe, and the unaffected but energetic tenderness of Otway. He brought back to the stage some of the grosser features of the dramas of the preceding centuries, which lowered the standard of woman, and made her not less eager to be won than dishonest lovers were to woo. The same villainous spirit marked the epilogue, furnished by the Hon. George Lamb (afterwards Viscount Melbourne). In it, the villainous Bertram was covered with the dignity of a hero; and of woman, generally, it was said by the writer, that—"Vice, on her bosom, lulls remorseful care."

As in the case of Sheil, Maturin's second tragedy, "Manuel," did not fulfil even the small promise of his first; and, after "Bertram," "Manuel" was found insipid,—but more pretentious, roaring, and bombastic. There is no such nonsense in the

tragedies of Proctor, Milman, or Sheridan Knowles, as there is in Maturin's "Manuel." And "Mirandola," "Fazio," and "Virginius," will never want readers; and "Virginius," especially, will never want an audience, if it be but fittingly represented. The principal character in this play was written expressly for Edmund Kean; but accident conveyed it to Mr. Macready, who found therein golden opportunity, and knew how to avail himself of it. To the former, with a sketch of whose career I close my contributions towards a History of the English Stage, may be happily applied the lines of the French poet:—

"Ce glorieux acteur,
Des plus fameux héros fameux imitateur;
Du théâtre Anglais, la splendeur et la gloire,
Mais si mauvais acteur dedans sa propre histoire."

CHAPTER L.

EDMUND KEAN.

"It is, perhaps, not generally known," says Macaulay, when closing his narrative of the death of the great Lord Halifax, in 1695, "that some adventurers who, without advantages of fortune or position, made themselves conspicuous by the mere force of ability, inherited the blood of Halifax. He left a natural son, Henry Carey, whose dramas once drew crowded audiences to the theatres, and some of whose gay and spirited verses still live in the memory of hundreds of thousands. From Henry Carey descended that Edmund Kean who, in our own time, transformed himself so marvellously into Shylock, Iago, and Othello." Edmund Kean, however, was prouder of what he achieved for himself through his genius, than of any oblique splendour derived to him from the author of the *Maxims* and the great chief of the Trimmers,—if, indeed, he knew anything about him.

A posthumous son of Henry Carey,—George Saville Carey,—inherited much of his father's talents. After declining to learn the mystery of printing, he tried that of playing; he produced little effect, but by singing, reciting, and above all by his imitations; he lived a vagabond life, and managed to keep his head above water, with now and then a fearful dip into the mud below, for forty years; when paralysis depriving him of the means to earn his bread, he contrived to escape further misery here, by strangling himself. He was a man of great genius not unmixed with a tendency to insanity. He was cursed in one fair and worthless daughter, "Nance Carey," whose intimacy with Aaron Kean,—a tailor, or Edmund Kean, a builder, but, at all events, brother to Moses Kean, a tailor, and as admirable a mimic as George Carey himself,—resulted in her becoming the mother of a boy, her pitiless neglect of whom seems to have begun even before his

birth. Whether that event took place in an otherwise unoccupied chamber in Gray's Inn, which had been lent to her vagabond father, or in a poor room in Castle Street, Leicester Square, or in a miserable garret in Ewer Street, Southwark, for all of which there are respective claimants, Miss Carey's son had a narrow escape from being born in the street. But for Miss Tidswell, the actress, and another womanly gossip or two, this would have happened. It seemed all one to "Nance Carey," who having performed *her* part in this portion of the play, deserted her child, and left him to the cruelty, caprice, or humanity of strangers. Little Edmund Kean, born in 1787, or in the following year, for the date is uncertain, had a hard life of it, from the first. In a loving arm he never was held, a loving eye never looked down upon him. Had he not been a beautiful child, perhaps the charity of Miss Tidswell and of whomsoever else extended it to him, would have failed. It is certain that they took the earliest opportunity of deriving profit from him; and before he was three years old, Edmund Kean figured as a Cupid in one of Noverre's ballets at the Opera House. He owed his election to this dignity to his rare personal beauty, an endowment which went for nothing in his subsequent appointment, when four or five years of age, to act as one of the imps attendant on the witches in "Macbeth." John Kemble was then supreme at Drury Lane. He was little conscious that among the noisy and untractable young imps, the wildest by far would prove to be, what Mrs. Siddons would have called,—"one of those new idols which the public delight to set up, in order to mortify their old favourites!" One night the goblins fell over one another in the cavern-scene, Edmund going down first, out of weakness, or of mischief. This led to the dismissal of the whole troop; and some good Samaritan then sent young Kean to school. In Orange Court, Leicester Square, was the fountain whence he drew his first and almost only draught of learning. In that dirty locality may be found the shrine of three geniuses. There, Holcroft was born, Opie was housed, and Edmund Kean instructed. Thereafter comes Chaos; and it is only by glimpses that the whereabout of the naturally-gifted but most unhappy lad can be detected. A little outcast, with his weak legs in "irons," day and night, he sleeps between a poor married couple whose sides are hurt by his fetters. Miss Tidswell takes him, ties him to a bed-post, to secure his attention, teaches him elocution, and corrects him a little too harshly, though out of love. He dances

and tumbles at fairs and in taverns, performs wonderful feats, is kicked and starved, thrives nevertheless,—and conceives that there is something within him which should set him above his fellows in hard work and lean fare. And then, when he is becoming a bread-winner, he is claimed by his evil genius, Nance Carey.

His mother has been a stroller; she is a vagabond still; tramps the country with pomatums, and perfumes, and falballas, and her son is her pack-horse;—and the bird, to boot, that shall lay golden eggs for her. He is savage at having to plod through mud or dust, but he has a world of his own beyond it all; and he not only learns soliloquies from plays, but recites them in gentlemen's houses. To the audiences there, he goes confident but sensitive; proud and defiant, even when wounded by many a humiliation. By reciting, selling the wares in which Nance Carey dealt, and exhibiting in every possible and impossible play and posture, at fairs, he earned and received some small but well-merited wage. "She took it *all* from me!" cried the boy, in his anguish and indignation. A London Arab leads an easier life. It was a dark and hard life to Edmund,—Miss Tidswell occasionally appeared to do him a kindness, to give him bread, and more instruction for the stage. Of his father, we hear nothing save his rascal gallantry with Miss Carey; of his mother, nothing but her rapacity; of his uncle, Moses Kean, only that Miss Tidswell turned his wooden leg to account. When her young pupil, studying Hamlet, had to pronounce the words, "Alas, poor Yorick!" she first made him say, "Alas, poor uncle!" that the memory of the calamity the latter had suffered might dispose Edmund's face to seriousness! And then he is abroad again; not easily to be followed. His sensitive pride renders him hasty to take offence, and then he rushes from some friendly roof, and disappears, sinks down some horrible gulf, issues not purified, nor softened, nor inclined to give account of himself. A more sober flight took him to Madeira as a cabin-boy, whence he returned, disgusted with Thalatta. Finally, he runs the round of fairs again, and starves and has flashes of wild jollity, as such runners have; and pauses in his running at Windsor. He was just then the property of crafty old Richardson, and at Windsor Fair made such a local reputation by his elocution, that King George sent for him, and so enjoyed a taste of his quality that the young player carried away with him the bright guerdon of two guineas,—either to his manager or his mother, I forget which.

I think, however, this speaking in presence of royalty was the getting the foot on the first round of the slippery ladder which he was so desirous to ascend. He spoke a speech or two at some London theatres, when benefit nights admitted of extraordinary performances; and he now went the round of country theatres, and not of country fairs. It was not a less weary life; he starved as miserably as before, and he began to find a means of re-invigoration in "drink." Had his labour been paid according to its worth, the devil could not have flung this temptation in his way. "A better time will come bye and bye," said the poor stroller, who was always promising to himself, or to others, a happy period in which all would be right. In the course of his wanderings he played at Belfast. Mrs. Siddons passed that way too, and acted Zara and Lady Randolph. Edmund Kean, not then I believe, nineteen, played Osmyn and Young Norval. In the first part he was imperfect, and the Siddons shook her majestic head at the apparent cause. Nevertheless, her judgment was, that he played "well, *very* well; but there was too little of him wherewith to make a great actor!" If painstaking could do it, he was resolved to be one. No amount of labour to this end daunted him. However poor the task entrusted to him, he did his utmost for it. When playing in some fifth-rate character at the Haymarket, a generous colleague remarked:—"Look at the little man, he is trying to make a part of it." I find by the bills of the Haymarket Theatre, which Mr. Buckstone placed at my disposal, that Dubbs, in the "Review," to Fawcett's Caleb Quotem, was about the best character he played. Considering that he was at this time under twenty, his position was not a bad one; but it seemed to him to promise no amendment—and he again passed to the country, to play first business, end to be hungry three or four days out of the seven. He could not earn enough to enable him to travel from one place of engagement to another. He journeyed on foot, and when he came to a river, swam it (particularly when a press-gang was near), as readily as an Indian would have done. In some towns his Hamlet was not relished, but his Harlequin filled the house! The Guernsey critics censured his acting, on the ground that he would rudely turn his back on the audience, and make no more account of them than if they were the fourth side of a room in which he was meditating! When the Guernsey pit hissed him in Richard III., his cry, pointedly addressed to them: "Unmannered dogs! Stand ye, when I command!" rendered them silent. He tried the same trick, and not without effect, when the

pit of Drury Lane was hissing him, not for being a bad actor, but an immoral person!

"Who is that shabby little man?" said Mary Chambers, a young Waterford girl, who had been a governess, and who was going through her probationary time as an actress at Gloucester. "Who the devil is *she*?" asked Kean, after being soundly rated by her, for spoiling her performance through his unsettled memory. She was what Kean never thoroughly knew her to be—his good genius—worth more than all the kinsfolk he had ever possessed, including Miss Tidswell, who once gave him a home and the stick. The imprudent young couple, however, fell in love; they married; and the manager paid his congratulations to them, by turning them out of his company. This manager was Mr. Beverley. I have heard that Kean was attracted not only by the lady's beauty, but also by her display of dress and general outward show, which indicated possession of private means. But this display was made by the aid of her sister, whom she treated, let us hope, with all due gratitude. Beverley dismissed them, on the ground that the lady was of no use to him whatever, and that the attraction of Kean would wane, now he was no longer a young *unmarried* tragedian!

They loved, slaved, and starved. The misery of their lives is unparalleled. Heroic was the uncomplainingness with which it was endured by Mrs. Kean. *His* industry was really intense; his study of every character he had to play, careful, earnest, conscientious; and after acting with as much anxiety as if he had been performing before a jury of critics, he would return to his miserable home, saddened, furious, and unsober. "I played the part finely; and yet they did not applaud me!" Gleams of good fortune occasionally lit up their path. An engagement at Birmingham, at a guinea a week to each, was comparative wealth to them; and there Kean found the applause for which he sighed. His Octavian was preferred to Elliston's; and Stephen Kemble told him that his Hotspur and Henry IV., were superior to those of his brother, John Kemble. Kean thought of London. "If I could only get there, and succeed! If I *succeed*, I shall go mad!"

There was much to be suffered by Kean and his wife before that triumph came. For lack of means, they have to walk from Birmingham to Swansea. Two hundred miles, and that poor lady may be a mother before she accomplishes half of them! They wend painfully on, pale, hungry, and silent; twelve miles a day; not asking alms, but not above receiving that hospitality of

the poor which is true, because self-denying charity. Needing many things, but obtaining none of those she most needed, Mrs. Kean reached Bristol more dead than alive. A cast in a boat, more weary suffering, a son born, and an audience at Swansea who preferred Bengough, an elephantine simpleton, with large unmeaning eyes, to Edmund—tells the outline of his tale before they crossed from Wales to Waterford.

Soon in this troop, under Cherry, at Waterford, there were two men, destined to be at the very head of their respective vocations, as player and dramatic poet—Edmund Kean and Sheridan Knowles. At present they are only strolling players. The training of the two men had been totally different. Kean was "Nobody's Son," and had passed through the misery, degradation, and blackguardism attendant on such a parentage—his genius not slumbering, but ready to flash, like the diamond, when light and opportunity should present themselves.

Knowles, on the other hand, was the son of a scholar and a trainer of scholars. He came of a literary race; his sire compiled a dictionary. Sheridan, the lexicographer was his uncle; Richard Brinsley, his cousin. At an early age he was removed from his native city, Cork, to London, where the boy wrote boyish plays, and the youth grew up in friendship with Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Lamb. Then he went into the world, to fight his fight, and at four and twenty, that is, in 1808, I find him a tolerable actor, on the old Dublin stage in Crow street, and a very acceptable guest at firesides where merit, wit, and a harmonious voice were appreciated. Subsequently he joined the troop of vivacious Cherry, in Waterford. There he met with the little, bright-eyed, swarthy young man, who was Richard in the play, and Harlequin in the pantomime, on the same evening; who, in short, could do anything and did everything well. For him, Edmund Kean, Knowles wrote his first serious play, a melodramatic tragedy, "Leo, the Gipsey!" and in that piece Kean achieved so notable a triumph, that he would have chosen it for his first appearance in London, but that luckily for him, he had lost the copy.

Edmund worked steadily in the ancient Irish city. Of the general business I can say nothing, except that Mrs. Kean played a Virgin of the Sun, at a time when the character least suited her; but, for a reminiscence of a benefit night, I take half a page from Mr. Grattan. "The last thing I recollect of Kean in Waterford, was the performance for his benefit. The play was

Hannah More's tragedy of "Percy," in which he of course played the hero. Edwina was played by Mrs. Kean, who was applauded to her heart's content. Kean was so popular, both as an actor, and from the excellent character he bore, that the audience thought less of the actor's demerits than of the husband's feelings; and besides this, the *debutante* had many personal friends in her native city, and among the gentry of the neighbourhood, for she had been governess to the children of a lady of good fortune, who used all her influence at this benefit. After the tragedy, Kean gave a specimen of tight-rope dancing, and another of sparring with a professional pugilist. He then played the leading part in a musical interlude, and finished with Chimpanzee, the monkey, in the melo-dramatic pantomime of La Pérouse, and in this *character* he showed agility scarcely since surpassed by Mazurier or Gouffe, and touches of deep tragedy in the monkey's death scene, which made the audience shed tears."

From Waterford, Edmund and his wife took with them no more than they had brought, except an additional son, the day of whose birth was a happy day in the mother's calendar of sorrows. They suffered, and the children with them, all that humanity could suffer and yet live. I find them at Dumfries, depending for food and shelter upon the receipts at an "entertainment" given by Kean, in a room at a tavern. There was *one* auditor, and he paid sixpence! There were even worse disappointments than these; and, under their accumulation, I do not wonder that Kean broke into curses at his perverse destiny; or that Mrs. Kean, looking at her children, prayed to God that He would remove them, and her! They played at Edinburgh, and then from town to town they pursued their hapless pilgrimage. *He*, sometimes driven to fury and to drink; she, only asking for death to her and the two younger sufferers. Now and then, a divine charity enabled them to rest and refresh; and *once*, a divine by profession, in a country town, forbade them the use of a schoolroom, because they were actors! The reverend gentleman himself, probably, thought it very good amusement to listen to his own boys enacting the "Eunuchus" of Terence.

The wandering couple found themselves at York in the October of 1811, and in popular phrase, "hard up." The following copy of a manuscript bill, in Kean's handwriting, and drawn up for the printer, indicates their industry, necessities, poor hopes, and almost abject humility.

UNDER PATRONAGE.

BALL ROOM, MINSTER YARD,

Thursday Evening, October 10th, 1811,

MR. KEAN,

(*Late of the Theatre Royal Haymarket and Edinburgh, and Author of the Cottage Foundling; or, Robbers of Ancona, now preparing for immediate representation at the Theatre Lyceum*),

AND

MRS. KEAN,

(*Late of the Theatres Cheltenham and Birmingham*),

Respectfully inform the Inhabitants of York, and its Vicinity, that they will stop

FOR ONE NIGHT ONLY,

On their way to London; and present such Entertainments that have never failed of giving satisfaction, humbly requesting the support of the Public.

PART I.

A Scene from the Celebrated Comedy of

THE HONEY MOON;

OR,

HOW TO RULE A WIFE.

Duke Aranza . . MR. KEAN. Juliana . . MRS. KEAN.

Favourite Comic Song of "BEGGARS AND BALLAD SINGERS,"

In which Mr. KEAN will display his powers of Mimicry, in the well-known characters of London Beggars.

IMITATIONS

Of the London Performers, viz.—

KEMBLE, COOKE, BRAHAM, INCLEDON, MUNDEN, FAWCETT, and THE YOUNG ROSCIUS.

PART II.

THE AFRICAN SLAVES' APPEAL TO LIBERTY!!!

Scenes from the Laughable Farce of

THE WATERMAN;

OR,

THE FIRST OF AUGUST.

Tom Tug *(with the Songs of "Did you not hear of a Jolly Young Waterman" and the pathetic ballad of "Then farewell my trim-built Wherry")* . . . . . MR. KEAN.

Miss Whilhelmina . . . . . MRS. KEAN.

After which, Mr. KEAN *will sing in Character,*

George Alexander Stevens's Description

OF A

STORM.

PART III.

Scenes from the Popular Drama of

THE CASTLE SPECTRE.

Earl Osmond . . . Mr. KEAN. Angela . . . MRS. KEAN.

FAVOURITE COMIC SONG OF THE "COSMETIC DOCTOR."

To Conclude with the Laughable Farce of

SYLVESTER DAGGERWOOD,

OR,

THE DUNSTABLE ACTOR.

Female Author . . . . Mrs. KEAN.

Sylvester Daggerwood . . . . . Mr. KEAN *(in which character he will read the celebrated play-bill written by* G. COLMAN, ESQ., *and sing the "Four-and-Twenty Puppet Shows," originally sung by him at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket.*

Each character to be personated in their appropriate Dresses, made by the principal Theatrical Dress Makers of London; viz., BROOKS & HEATH, MARTIN, &c.

FIRST SEATS . . 2*s.* 6*d.* BACK SEATS . . 1*s.*

Doors to be open at SIX, and begin at SEVEN precisely.

TICKETS TO BE HAD AT THE PRINTER'S.

This bill proves, what has often been disputed, namely, that Kean was sufficiently familiar with the styles of the leading London performers, to be able to imitate them. In London, subsequently, one of his benefits was made hilarious by his acting the great scene in "Othello," as Braham and Incledon might be supposed to do it; and, on another, he played Tom Tug, and sang the songs with sweetness and effect.

But as yet, he is only on his way, as he says, to London, and famine, rage, drink, and tears marked the way of the wanderers. Brief engagements enabled them to exist, just to keep themselves out of the grave; and then came vacation and want, to let them slip back again to the very brink of that grave. Amid it all, Kean *did* succeed in making a reputation Passing through London he saw Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, in Wolsey and Constance,- and he registered a vow that *he would* be there a great actor, too! And so again to the country, to work hard, gain little, and wait; but also to enjoy some antepast of metropolitan triumph at Exeter, where his success was great, but not remunerative; where, with a great coat flung over his stage-dress, he might too often be seen at the bar of the tavern near the theatre, and where he enlarged his means by teaching dancing and fencing, elocution and boxing,—or "a word and a blow," as some wag styled the latter two accomplishments. Exeter foretold that he would not have to wait long, but all the prophetic patronage of Exeter did not furnish him with means to get to Dorchester by any other process than on foot, and with his son Charles on his back. The poor sick little Howard, the elder son, had to be conveyed thither by his mother. Howard had shown some promise of histrionic talent already, and he helped to win a little bread for the family before he died For this, perhaps, the father loved him; and toiled on till the tide came in his affairs which promised to raise him at its flood to highest fortune. That tide began to flow, after Dr. Drury had seen him act, and reported well of it to the Drury Lane Committee. It was running fast in the same direction when Kean saw a gentleman, in the boxes at Dorchester, so attentive to his playing, that Edmund acted to him alone. Kean's gentleman was Arnold, stage-manager of Drury Lane, and he commenced negotiations with Kean for an engagement, before they parted for the night. The poor player rushed home, hysterical with agitation and delight, and all his good impulses uppermost. He announced the glad intelligence to his wife, with the touching comment,—"If Howard only get well, we shall be all happy yet!"

Howard died, and Kean played, danced, sorrowed, and hoped, —for, the time at which he was to go up to London was at hand; and thither they went, at the close of the year 1813. When that season of 1813-14 opened, Drury was in a condition from which it could be relieved only by a genius;—and there he stood, in that cold hall, a little, pale, restless dark-eyed man, in a coat with two or three capes, and nobody noticed him! In Cecil Street, his family was living on little more than air; and he was daily growing sick, as he stood, waiting in that hall, for an audience with the manager; and subject to the sneers of passing actors. Even Rae, handsome and a fool, affected not to know him, though they had played together, when Rae's mother was matron at St. George's Hospital, and they had acted together at the Haymarket, in 1806, when Rae led the business, and Kean was but a supernumerary! Arnold treated him superciliously, with a "*young man!*"—as he condescended to speak, and put him off. Other new actors obtained trial parts, but there was none for that chafed, hungry, little man in the capes. Even drunken Tokely, like himself, from Exeter, could obtain a "first appearance," but Kean was put off. Stephen Kemble played Shylock, and failed! why not try a new actor? The Committee did so, and Mr. Huddart, from Dublin, went on as Shylock, and was never heard of more. And the poor stroller looked through the darkness of that miserable passage the while, and murmured, "Let me but get my foot before the floats, and *I'll* show them—!"

The permission came. Would he,—no, he *must* play Richard. "Shylock, or nothing!" was his bold reply. He was afraid of the littleness of his figure, (which he had heard scoffed at), being exposed in the "trunks" of Glo'ster. He hoped to hide it under the gown of Shylock. The Jew, or nothing! The young fellow, he was not yet six-and-twenty, was allowed to have his way. At the one morning rehearsal he fluttered his fellow-actors, and scared the manager, by his independence and originality. "Sir, this will never do!" cried Raymond, the acting manager. "It is quite an innovation; it cannot be permitted." "Sir," said the poor, proud man, "I wish it to be so;" and the players smiled, and Kean went home, that is, to his lodgings, in Cecil Street, on that snowy, foggy, 26th of January, 1814, calm, hopeful, and hungry. "To-day," said he, "I must *dine*."

Having accomplished that rare feat, he went forth alone, and on foot. "I wish," he remarked, "I was going to be shot!" He had with him a few properties which he was bound to procure for himself, tied up in a poor handkerchief, under his arm. His wife

remained, with their child, at home. Kean tramped on beneath the falling snow, and over that which thickly encumbered the ground, solid here; there in slush; and, bye and bye, pale, quiet, but fearless, he dressed in a room shared by two or three others, and went down to the wing by which he was to enter. Hitherto no one had spoken to him, save Jack Bannister, who said a cheering word; and Oxberry, who had tendered to him a glass, and wished him good fortune. "By Jove!" exclaimed a first-rater, looking at him, "Shylock in a black wig! Well!!"—In the good old times the wig was of a *Judas colour*. In an epitaph on Burbage reference is made to—

"————the red-haired Jew
Which sought the bankrupt merchant's pound of flesh."

The house could hold, as it is called, £600; there was not more than a sixth of that sum in front. Winter without, his comrades within; all was against him. At length, he went on, with Rae, as Bassanio, in ill-humour; and groups of actors at the wings, to witness the first scene of a new candidate. All that Edmund Kean ever did, was gracefully done; and the bow which he made, in return to the welcoming applause, was eminently graceful. Dr. Drury, the head master of Harrow, who took great interest in him, looked fixedly at him as he came forward. Shylock leant over his crutched stick, with both hands; and, looking askance at Bassanio, said: "Three thousand ducats?" paused, bethought himself, and then added: "Well?" *He is safe!* said Dr. Drury.

The groups of actors soon after dispersed to the green room. As they reached it, there reached there, too, an echo of the loud applause given to Shylock's reply to Bassanio's assurance that he may take the bond. "I *will be* assured I may!" Later came the sounds of the increased approbation bestowed on the delivery of the passage ending with,—"and for these courtesies, I'll lend you thus much moneys." The act came to an end gloriously; and the players in the green room looked for the coming among them of the new Shylock. He proudly kept aloof; knew he was friendless; but felt that he was, in himself, sufficient.

He wandered about the back of the stage, thinking, perhaps, of the mother and child at home; and sure, now, of having at least made a step towards triumph. He wanted no congratulations; and he walked cheerfully down to the wing where the scene was about to take place between him and his daughter, Jessica, in his

very calling to whom:—"Why, Jessica! I say"—there was, as some of us may remember, from an after night's experience, a charm, as of music. The whole scene was played with rare merit: but the absolute triumph was not won till the scene (which was marvellous in his hands) in the third act, between Shylock, Solanio, and Salarino, ending with the dialogue between the first and Tubal. Shylock's anguish at his daughter's flight; his wrath at the two Christians who make sport of his anguish; his hatred of all Christians, generally, and of Antonio in particular; and then his alternations of rage, grief, and ecstasy, as Tubal relates the losses incurred in the search of that naughty Jessica, her extravagances, and then the ill-luck that had fallen upon Antonio;—in all this, there was such originality, such terrible force, such assurance of a new and mighty master, that the house burst forth into a very whirlwind of approbation. "What now?" was the cry in the green room. The answer was, that the presence and the power of the genius were acknowledged with an enthusiasm which shook the very roof. How so select an audience contrived to raise such a roar of exultation, was a permanent perplexity to Billy Oxberry.

Those who had seen Stephen Kemble's Shylock, and that of Huddart, this season, must have by this time confessed, that the new actor had superseded both. He must himself have felt, that if he had not yet surpassed Cooke, and Henderson, and Macklin, he was tending that way; and was already their equal. Whatever he felt, he remained reserved and solitary; but he was now sought after. Raymond, the acting manager, who had haughtily told him his innovations "would not do," came to offer him oranges. Arnold, the stage-manager, who had *young-manned* him, came to present him, "sir!" with some negus. Kean cared for nothing more now, than for his fourth and last act; and in that his triumph culminated. His calm demeanor at first; his confident appeal to justice; his deafness, when appeal is made to him for mercy; his steady joyousness, when the young lawyer recognises the validity of the bond; his burst of exultation, when his right is confessed; his fiendish eagerness, when whetting the knife;—and then, the sudden collapse of disappointment and terror, with the words,—"Is *that*—the Law?"—in all, was made manifest, that a noble successor to the noblest of the actors of old, had arisen. Then, his trembling anxiety to recover what he had before refused; his sordid abjectness, as he finds himself foiled, at every turn; his subdued fury; and, at the last, (and it

was always the crowning glory of his acting in this play), the withering sneer, hardly concealing the crushed heart, with which he replied to the jibes of Gratiano, as he left the court;—all raised a new sensation in an audience, who acknowledged it in a perfect tumult of acclamation. As he passed to his dressing room, Raymond saluted him with the confession, that he had made a hit; Pope, more generous, avowed that he had saved the house from ruin.

And then, while Bannister was dashing through Dick, in the "Apprentice,"* I seem to see the hero of the night staggering home through the snow, drunk with delicious ecstasy, all his brightest dreams realised, and all his good impulses surging within him. He may be in a sort of frenzy, as he tells of his proud achievement; but, at its very wildest, he exclaims: "Mary, you shall ride in your carriage, yet!" and taking his son, Charles, from the cradle, swears he "shall go to Eton;" but therewith something overshadows his joy, and he murmurs, "If Howard had but lived to see it!"

That poor wife and mother must have enjoyed, on that eventful night, the very brightest of the few gleams of sunshine that fell upon her early, hapless life. Thenceforth, there was never to be misery or sorrow, in that household, again! Poor lady! She did not, perhaps, remember that Edmund had said, "*If* I succeed,—it will drive me mad!"

But not yet: all was triumph for awhile; and worthily it was won. His audiences rose, from one of a £100 to audiences of £600; and £20 a week rewarded efforts, for far less than which, he subsequently received £50 a night. He was advanced to the dignity of having a dressing room to himself. Legislators, poets, nobles, thronged his tiring room, where Arnold took as much care of him, as if on his life hung more than the well-being of the theatre. Friends flocked to him, as they are wont to do, where there is an opportunity of basking in pleasant sunshine, imparted by genius. And old Nance Carey turned up, to exact £50 a year from her not too delighted son, and to introduce a Henry Darnley, who *would* call Edmund, "dear brother!"

* This was the character in which Bannister made his first appearance on the stage, six-and-thirty years before, viz., in 1778. Garrick had advised him to try the tragic part of Zaphna! On the night that John Kemble first appeared at Drury (30th September, 1783, as Hamlet), Bannister also played in the after-piece, "High Life Below Stairs," in which he acted Lovell.

Some years later, in 1829, Moore was talking with Mrs. Kean, of this critical period in Edmund's career. The poet suggested, that some memorial of his first appearance should be preserved. "Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Kean; "will you write his life? You shall have half the profits;" adding, as she probably remembered the dark time which had come upon her since the sunshine,—"if you will only give me a little."

But success was not to be considered as achieved, by playing one character supremely well. Kean had, in the general memory, shaken Macklin from his supremacy in Shylock. He was now summoned to show himself worthy of being the successor of Garrick,—by acting Richard III. A few nights before he played the part, it was performed at Covent Garden, by John Kemble; and a short time after Kean had triumphed, it was personated by Young; but Kemble could not prevent, nor Young impede, the triumph of the new actor, who now made Richard his own, as he had previously done with Shylock.

His Richard (on the 12th of February) settled his position with the critics; and the criticism to which he was subjected was, for the most part, admirably and impartially written. He is sometimes spoken of as "this young man;" at others, "this young gentleman." "Even Cooke's performance," says one, "was left at an immeasurable distance." A second adds, "it was the most perfect performance of any that has been witnessed since the days of Garrick." Of the grand effects followed by a storm of applause, a third writes that "electricity itself was never more instantaneous in its operation." They are, however, occasionally hyper-critical. The able critic of the *Morning Chronicle* objected, that in the young man's Richard "too great reliance was placed on the expression of the countenance, which is a language intelligible only to a part of the house;" and a contemporary thought that when the young gentleman, as Richard, crossed his hands behind his back, during his familiar colloquy with Buckingham, the action was altogether *too natural!* Others point to attitudes which Titian might have painted. Such use of eye, and lip, and muscle, had never had anything comparable to it since the best days of Garrick. Even Sylvanus Urban aroused himself, and declared, that Mr. Kean's success had given new interest to the biography of Richard III.

Indeed, this second glory was greater than the first, for the difficulties were greater, and they were all surmounted. Joyous and sarcastic in the opening soliloquy; devilish, as he passed his

bright sword through the still-breathing body of Lancaster; audaciously hypocritical, and almost too exulting, in the wooing of Lady Anne; cruelly kind to the young Princes, his eye smiling while his foot seemed restless to crush the two spiders that so vexed his heart;—in representing all this there was an originality and a nature which were entirely new to the delighted audience. Then they seemed to behold altogether a new man revealed to them, in the first words uttered by him from the throne,—"Stand all apart!" from which period to the last struggle with Richmond, there was an uninterrupted succession of beauties; even in the bye-play he found means to extort applause, and a graceful attitude, an almost silent chuckle, a significant glance,—even so common-place a phrase as "Good night, my Lords," uttered before the battle of the morrow, were responded to by acclamations such as are awarded to none but the great masters of the art.

The triumph was cumulative, and it was crowned by the tent-scene, the battle, and the death. Probably no actor ever even approached Kean in the two last incidents. He fenced with consummate grace and skill; and fought with an energy that seemed a fierce reality. Rae had sneered at the "little man," but Rae now felt bound to be civil to the great tragedian, and referring to the passage of arms in "Richard III.," he, having to play Richmond, asked, "Where shall I hit you, sir, to-night?" "Where you can, sir," answered Kean; and he kept Richmond off, in that famous struggle, till Rae's sword-arm was weary with making passes. His attempt to "collar" Richmond when his own sword had fallen from him was so doubtful in taste that he subsequently abandoned it; but in the faint, yet deadly-meant passes, which he made with his swordless arm, after he had received his death-blow, there was the conception of a great artist; and there died with him a malignity which mortal man had never before so terribly pourtrayed. Young, in his dying scene of Richard, used to fling his sword at Richmond, a trick which the critics very properly denounced. Some critics thought that Mr. Kean's figure and voice were against him; others called him "The Fortunate Actor!" Mrs. Richard Trench thus wrote of him to Mrs. Lefanu, in the December of this year:—"He delighted me in *Richard the Third*. He carries one's views forwards and backwards as to the character, instead of confining them, like other actors, within the limits of the present hour; and he gives a breadth of colouring to the part, that strongly

excites the imagination. He showed me that Richard possessed a mine of humour and pleasantry, with all the grace of high breeding grafted on strong and brilliant intellect. He gave probability to the drama by throwing this favourable light on the character, particularly in the scene with Lady Anne; and he made it more consistent with the varied lot of poor humanity. He reminded me constantly of Buonaparte,—that restless quickness, that Catiline inquietude, that fearful somewhat, resembling the impatience of a lion in his cage . . . . I could willingly have heard him repeat his part that same evening." At this time, 1814, Moore speaks of "poor Mr. Kean," as being "in the honey-moon of criticism;" and then the bard speaks disrespectfully of the critics. "Next to the pleasure," he says, "of crying a man down, your critics enjoy the vanity of writing him up; but when once up, and fixed there, he is a mark for their arrows ever after."

Kean's other characters this season were Hamlet (12th March), when to John Bannister was assigned the first of the two Gravediggers, whom he had restored to the stage from which they had been abolished by Garrick; Othello, to the Iago, of Pope; and Iago, to the Othello of Sowerby, Pope, Rae, and Elliston; Miss Smith, who refused to play the Queen, in "Richard," being his Desdemona. He also acted Luke, in "Riches" ("City Madam"), to the Lacy of Wallack; and the Lady Traffic of Mrs Edwin. Of these, he was always inclined to think Hamlet his best character. He had, perhaps, studied it more deeply than the others, and Mrs. Garrick took such interest in his representation of it, that on comparing it with her husband's, she saw only one great defect,—in the closet scene. Garrick was severer with the Queen of Denmark than Kean, and Mrs. Garrick persuaded him, though unconvinced by her, to throw more sternness into this celebrated scene. The good old lady merited *some*, yet not *such* concession; but then she invited Kean to Adelphi Terrace, and sent him fruit from Hampton, and made him a present of Garrick's stage-jewels. The young man was in a fair way of being spoiled, as Pope said of Garrick, when thinking of the laborious, but splendid time of his friend and favourite, Betterton. Tenderness to Ophelia, affection for his mother, reverential awe of his father, and a fixed resolution to fulfil the mission confided to him by that father, were the distinct "motives," so to speak, of his Hamlet. The critics, especially, dwell on the tender vibration of his voice, when uttering the word "father" to the Ghost; they approve of his

sinking on one knee before the solemn spirit, and they are lost in admiration of his original action when, instead of keeping the Ghost off with his sword, when he bids it, "go on," he pointed it back at his friends to deter them from preventing his following the visionary figure. This, and another original point, have become stage-property. I allude to the scene in which he seems to deal so harshly with Ophelia. At the close of it, Kean used to return from the very extremity of the stage, take Ophelia's hand, kiss it with a tender rapture, look mournfully loving upon her, with eyes full of beautiful significance, and then rush off. The effect never failed, and the approbation was tumultuous. "The nature without vulgarity, or affectation" (says Mr. Collins in the Diary, quoted by his son and biographer), "which he displayed throughout the part, came home to the feelings. His keeping of Ophelia's hand, his forgetting and recollection of the speech about Pyrrhus, &c., prove him to be a man of genius."

Gracefully and earnestly as his Hamlet was played, it yielded in attractiveness to his Othello, which, despite some little exaggeration of action, when told to beware of jealousy, was, perhaps, the greatest of his achievements. Coleridge, indeed, did not think him a thorough-bred gentleman enough to act the Moor! and yet Mrs. Trench noted his "graces of high breeding," which distinguished his Richard. Coleridge absurdly said, that Kean was "*original*," but that "he *copied from himself!*" Collins, the artist, wrote in his diary: "He appears to be fully aware of what the *public* likes in an actor, rather than determined to do what *he* thinks right." Collins thought his voice "good." Kean's adversaries denounced it as "bad;" but here in the tender scene of "Othello," (where love for Desdemona was above all other passion, even when for love he jealously slew her), he had as much power over his "bad voice," as his adversaries called it, as John Kemble over his asthmatic cough, and attuned it to the tenderness to which he had to give expression. In the fiercer scenes he was unsurpassable,—and in the great third act none who remember him will, I think, be prepared to allow that he ever had, or is ever likely to have, an equal. John Kemble himself said of Kean's Othello:—"If the justness of its conception had been but equal to the brilliancy of execution it would have been perfect; but," added the older actor, with some sense, perhaps, of being disturbed by the younger player, "the whole thing is a mistake; the fact being that Othello was a slow man,"—to be moved, he was; but being moved, swift and terrible in moving to consequent

purpose. Fanny Kemble alludes to the Kemble jealousy of Kean; "I have lived among those," she says, "whose theatrical creed would not permit them to acknowledge Kean as a great actor. He possessed those rare gifts of nature, without which art alone is as a dead body. If he was irregular and unartist-like in his performances, so is Niagara compared with the waterworks at Versailles."

Iago, curiously enough, was not so welcome a part to Kean as Othello. Its characteristic was the concealment of his hypocrisy, and in the delineation of such a part Kean was usually unrivalled. Some of his admirers considered his Iago as fine as Richard, but he never played the two with equal care and equal success. On the other hand, he was pleased with the strong *oppositions* in the character of Luke, but his audiences were not satisfied in the same degree, and it fell out of his repertory. He of course thought them in the wrong; lamented on the few competent judges of acting, and limited these to lawyers, doctors, artists, critics, and literary men. He was then the (often unwilling) guest of noblemen who, I doubt not, were excellent judges, too; but Kean thought otherwise: "They talk a great deal," he said, "of what I don't understand,"—politics, and equally abstruse matters; "but when it comes to plays, they talk such nonsense!"

I am not about to follow this actor through his score of seasons, but as a sample of his value to the treasury of Drury Lane, at this time, and therefore to the stage, I may just make record of the fact that in this first season, he played Shylock fifteen times, Richard twenty-five, Hamlet eight, Othello ten, Iago eight, and Luke four; and that in those seventy nights, the delighted treasurer of Drury Lane struck a balance of profit to the theatre, amounting in round numbers, to £17,000. Previous to the appearance granted to him so tardily, there had been one hundred and thirty-nine nights of continual loss. Mr. Whitbread, a proprietor, might well say of him that "he was one of those prodigies that occur only once or twice in a century."

In this same season, Kemble stood his ground against Kean in the one character played by both,—Hamlet; but two new actors,—tall, earnest, handsome, but ungainly Conway, from Dublin, and Terry, from Edinburgh,—only took a respectable position. The Othello of the first, and the Shylock of the second, were never heard of after Kean had played and made them his own.

In Kean's second season, he added to his other characters, Macbeth, which had some magnificent points, but in which

Kemble had personal advantages over him. Mrs. Trench writes to Lady Fanny Proby:—"I took my boys to see 'Macbeth' last night, but found that though they read Shakspeare, they did not readily catch the language of the scene. They understood Kean well, his tones are so natural, but the raised voice and declamatory style in which most others pronounce tragedy, renders it, I see, nearly unintelligible to children. I was astonished by Kean's talents in all that followed the murder, highly as I before thought of them. I suppose remorse was never more finely expressed; and I quitted the house with more admiration of him, and even of Shakspeare, than ever I had felt before." Kean's other characters this season, were Romeo, which continues the traditional glory of Barry; Reuben Glenroy and Penruddock, in neither of which he equalled Kemble; Zanga, played in a style which made the fame of Mossop pale, and shook Young and Kemble from an old possession; Richard II., in an adaptation by Merivale, acted with a new grace to the expression of melancholy; Abel Drugger, concerning which he answered the legendary—"I know it," to the "you can't play it," of Mrs. Garrick; Leon, performed with moderate success, and Octavian, with rare sweetness, but not with such rare ability as to make John Kemble uneasy.

Kean also acted his first original character, Egbert, in the tragedy of that name, by Mrs. Wilmot. His prestige suffered a little in consequence, for Egbert was condemned on the first night. He had compensation enough in Zanga. As one who stood among the crowd in the pit passage heard a shout and clamour of approbation within, he asked if Zanga had just previously said, "Then lose her!" for that phrase, in the country, when uttered by Kean, used to make the walls shake; and he was answered that it was so. I remember having read that some one was with Southey, when the "Revenge" was played, and that when Zanga consummated his vengeance in the words, "Know then 'twas I,"—lifting up his arms, as he spoke, over the fainting Alonzo, and seeming to fill the theatre,—the same image was simultaneously presented to the minds of the two friends. "He looks like Michael Angelo's rebellious Archangel!" thought one. "He looks like the Arch-Fiend himself," said the other.

Covent Garden struggled nobly, with its old and strong company, against the single power of Kean, at Drury Lane; but it found its best ally in a new actress. On the 6th of October, 1814, Miss O'Neill made her first appearance in Juliet. It is

not my intention to do more than record the names of the players who made their *début* after the coming of Edmund Kean, but there is something so singular in the lucky chance which led to Miss O'Neill's well-merited fortune, that I venture to tell it the words of Michael Kelly.

Let me first remark that, no doubt, some of us are old enough to have seen, as many of us have heard, of Miss Walstein, that "sort of Crow-street Bonaparte," who struggled so bravely, though so briefly, at Drury Lane against Miss O'Neill, when the latter carried the town by her superior charms and talents. Miss O'Neill was furnished by her undoubtedly great rival with the means of supplanting her. Had not Walstein been arrogant, the famous Juliet of our infantine days might never have sighed on the Covent Garden balcony. Her first step, however, was made on the stage at Crow Street, and Miss Walstein unwittingly helped her to obtain a secure footing. The story is thus told by garrulous Mike Kelly:—"Miss Walstein who was the heroine of the Dublin stage, and a great and deserved favourite, was to open the theatre in the character of Juliet. Mr. Jones received an intimation from Miss Walstein that without a certain increase of salary, and other privileges, she would not come to the house. Mr Jones had arrived at the determination to shut up his theatre sooner than submit to what he thought an unwarrantable demand, when Mac Nally, the box-keeper, who had been the bearer of Miss Walstein's message, told Mr. Jones that it would be a pity to shut up the house; that there was a remedy if Mr. Jones chose to avail himself of it. 'The girl, sir,' said he, 'who has been so often recommended to you as a promising actress, is now at an hotel in Dublin with her father and brother, where they have just arrived, and is proceeding to Drogheda, to act at her father's theatre there. I have heard it said by persons who have seen her, that she plays Juliet extremely well, and is very young and very pretty. I am sure that she would be delighted to have the opportunity of appearing before a Dublin audience, and if you please, I will make her the proposal.' The proposal was made, and accepted; and on the following Saturday, 'the girl,' who was Miss O'Neill, made her *début* on the Dublin stage as Juliet. The audience was delighted; she acted the part several nights, and Mr. Jones offered her father and brother engagements on very liberal terms, which were thankfully accepted. 'In Dublin,' adds Kelly, 'she was not only a great favourite in tragedy, but also in many parts of genteel comedy. I have there

seen her play Letitia Hardy; she danced very gracefully, and introduced my song, 'In the rough Blast heave the Billows,' originally sung by Mrs. Jordan, at Drury Lane, which she sang so well as to produce a general call for its repetition from the audience. She was in private life highly esteemed for her many good qualities. Her engagement in Dublin wafted Miss Walstein from Dublin, where she had been for many years the heroine of Crow Street, to Drury Lane, where she made her appearance as Calista, in 'The Fair Penitent,' on the 15th of November, 1814, but only remained one season."

It would seem as if Drury Lane were weary by this time of its success, for early in 1815-16 that excellent actor, Dowton, who disliked seeing Kean's name in large type, tried to extinguish him by playing Shylock! The Exeter grocer and fruiterer's son and Kentish baker's brother, could play Sheva and Cantwell, and many other parts, admirably; but Shylock!—No, let us pass to more equal adversaries; in a contest between whom, Kean did fairly extinguish his antagonist. In this season Kean acted all his old and many new parts, among the latter, Shakspeare's Richard II., Bajazet, Duke Aranza (in which Elliston had the better of him), Goswin ("Beggars' Bush"), Sir Giles Overreach, and Sforza. Among these, Sir Giles stands pre-eminent for its perfectness, from the first words, "Still cloistered up," to the last convulsive breath drawn by him in that famous *one* scene of the fifth act, in which, through his terrible intensity, he once made so experienced an actress as Mrs. Glover faint away,—not at all out of flattery, but from emotion.

Now, Sir Giles had been one of Kemble's weaknesses; and he affected it as he might have done Coriolanus. He had played it since Mr. Kean had come to London, but as no comparison could be drawn, his performance was accepted, as even an indifferent but honest effort by a great artist deserves to be. But after Edmund Kean had added another rose to his chaplet, by his marvellous impersonation of Sir Giles, Kemble played it again, as if to challenge comparison. I am sorry to say it, but John Kemble was hissed! No! It was his Sir Giles that was hissed. Two nights later he acted Coriolanus, the merits of which were acknowledged with enthusiasm by his audience. But he never ventured on Sir Giles again! In this last character, all the qualities of Kean's voice came out to wonderful purpose, especially in the scene where Lovel asks him,

"Are you not moved with the sad imprecations
And curses of whole families, made wretched
By your sinister practices?"

to which Sir Giles replies:—

"Yes, as rocks are
When foamy billows split themselves against
Their flinty ribs; or as the moon is mov'd
When wolves with hunger pin'd, howl at her brightness."

I seem still to hear the words and the voice as I pen this passage; now composed, now grand as the foamy billows; so flute-like on the word "moon," creating a scene with the sound; and anon sharp, harsh, fierce in the last line, with a look upward from those matchless eyes, that rendered the troop visible, and their howl perceptible to the ear;—the whole serenity of the man, and the solidity of his temper, being illustrated less by the assurance in the succeeding words than by the exquisite music in the tone with which he uttered the word "brightness."

It was on the night he played Sir Giles for the first time in London, that Mrs. Kean, who seems to have been too nervous to witness his new essays, asked him what that hanger-on at the theatres, Lord Essex, had thought of it. You know the jubilant reply:—"D— Lord Essex, Mary! The pit rose at me!" In Sir Giles, his earnestness seemed unquestionable, yet Mrs. Fanny Kemble says, Kean could talk gibberish, while the people were in an uproar of applause at his "finest points." She states that, "John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were always in earnest in what they were about; and Miss O'Neill used to cry bitterly in all her tragedy parts."

But to Sir Giles were not confined Kean's triumphs of this year. He created the part of Bertram, in Maturin's tragedy of that name; and he alone stands associated with the part. It suited him admirably,—for it is full of passion, pathos, wild love, and tenderness. One great point made by the actor (whose Imogine was Miss Somerville, afterwards Mrs. Bunn) was in the exquisite delivery of the words, "God bless the child!" They have made many a tear to flow, and he acquired the necessary pathos and power by first repeating them at home, while he looked on his sleeping boy; and I do not know a prettier incident in the life of this impulsive actor. Would there were more of them.

In the season of 1816-17, John Kemble withdrew, full of honours, though his laurels had been a little shaken. As opponents to the now well-established actor at Drury Lane, two gentlemen were brought forward, Mr. Macready, from Dublin, and Mr. Junius Booth, from Worthing. The former is the son of the respectable actor and dramatic author, whose abandonment of upholstery, in Dublin, did something towards giving to the stage the son who long refined and adorned it. Mr. Macready made all the more progress by not coming in contrast, or comparison, with Kean. He was of the Kemble school, but with ideas of his own, and he made his way to fame, independently. But Booth was so perfectly of the Kean school that his Richard appeared to be as good as his master's. Indeed, some thought it better. Whereupon, Kean counselled the Drury Lane management to bring him over to that theatre. It was done. They played in Othello,—the Moor by Kean; Iago by Booth. The contact was fatal to the latter. He fell ingloriously, even as a Mr. Cobham had done before him in an audacious attempt on Richard; but both gentlemen became heroes to transpontine audiences.

Kean's other achievements this season were his fine interpretation of Timon, after Shakspeare's text, "with no other omissions than such as the refinement of manners has rendered necessary;" his creation of Maturin's "Manuel," and his last triumph over Kemble, in doing what the latter had failed to do,—stirring the souls, raising the terror, and winning the sympathy of the audience by one of the most finished of his impersonations,—Sir Edward Mortimer. Oronooko, Selim, and Paul, were the other characters newly essayed by him during this season. The last two were for his benefit, and therewith he closed a season,—the last very fruitful in great triumphs, but not the first in the chronicle of his decline.

He was now the oft-invited guest of people with whom he did not particularly care to associate. Moore chronicles his name as one of the guests with Lord Petersham, Lord Nugent, the Hon. William Spencer, Colonel Berkeley, and Moore, at an "odd dinner," given by Horace Twiss, in Chancery Lane, in 1819, in "a borrowed room, with champagne, pewter spoons, and old Lady Cork." Lord Byron was reluctant to believe in him, but after seeing him in Richard, he presented the actor with a sword, and a box adorned by a richly-chased boar hunt; when Lord Byron had seen his Sir Giles, he sent to the player a valuable Damascus blade. His compliments, at Kean's benefit, took the shape of a

fifty-pound note ; and he once invited him to dinner, which Kean left early, that he might take the chair at some pugilistic supper !

I may notice, by the way, one of his provincial engagements, that he played five nights at Glasgow during Passion Week, at which time even Presbyterian ministers would go to the play, were it only to show their contempt for a Popish observance. At Edinburgh, he played six nights, in 1816, for one hundred guineas a night ! The excitement he created quite equalled that raised by Mrs. Siddons and Miss O'Neill ; but great, also, was the controversy between old and young playgoers as to his merits, when compared with Kemble and Cooke. How strongly did all this contrast with the time when he played at a tavern in Dumfries, and had one spectator, who had payed sixpence for admission !

Edmund Kean acted Orestes only in Bath and Edinburgh. His dress, and that of his faithful Pylades (Ward), at the first place, were covered with ribbons ! Defective in costume, Kean was also deficient in memory. At Bath he stumbled through the character ; at Edinburgh he improvised a good deal of it ; and in the mad scene, substituted fragments from any other mad character he had in his mind for the moment, particularly Sir Giles Overreach ! All this flustered the Pyrrhus especially, whose embarrassment was so marked, that the Edinburgh critics took care to tell him that he ought to have exercised more industry in mastering the words of his part, when he had to play with so great a master as Mr. Kean !

CHAPTER LI.

EDMUND KEAN—CONTINUED.

Between the last-named period, and the time when Edmund Kean played Virginius, there is but one character in which he produced any extraordinary effect—namely, King Lear. His other characters only seem to glide past, and disappear. Such are Richard, Duke of York, in a compilation from several of Shakspeare's plays; Barabbas, in Marlowe's "Jew of Malta," the heaviness of which he relieved by a song, sweetly warbled; Selim, in Dimond's melo-dramatic "Bride of Abydos;" Young Norval, in which he was graceful and affecting; King John, which did not disturb the repose of Kemble; and Alexander the Great, which could as little stir the dead sleep of Verbruggen. Something more effective was his Brutus, in Payne's compilation. The scene of his simulated folly was skilfully played: that with the son whom he condemns to death, full of tenderness and gravity. He could not sustain Miss Porter's "Switzerland," and he would not support Mr. Bucke's "Italians." Soane literally measured him for Malvesi, in the "Dwarf of Naples," and misfitted him grievously. Mr. Twiss had no better success with the "Carib Chief," in which Kean played Omreah; and my recollections of his Rolla are not so agreeable as those which I have of Young, and of Wallack. Well do I remember his Coriolanus, for which he was physically unfitted; but only a great actor could have played the scene of the candidateship, and that of the death, as Kean did, who, however, gave more pleasure to the followers of the Kemble school by this performance, than he did to his own. He made up for all, by the grandeur, the touchingness, and the sublimity of his King Lear. It was throughout thoroughly original, in conception and in execution, and by it he maintained his pre-eminency, and sustained, as I have said, without increas-

ing his old glory. He did not quite realise his own assertion: "I will make the audience as mad as I shall be."

Genest says, that "his personal appearance was better than Kemble's or Young's, and his manner more natural. In the mad scenes he seemed to copy Murphy's account of Garrick." The only drawback I have heard of to this noble, and last of his noble and complete performances was, that he was neither tall enough nor strong enough to carry off the body of Cordelia (Mrs. W. West).

His laurels were menaced. Frederick Yates came from the camp, and flashed a promise in tragedy which moved the hearts of playgoers, who saw his later devotion to comedy with early regret, but an ultimate delight. Mr. Macready was steadily rising from melo-drama to the highest walks of tragedy, and his golden opportunity came in Virginius. Hitherto, Kean had been shaking the secondary actors of the old Kemble type, into fits of jealousy, fear, disgust, and admiration. Expressly for him did Knowles write the "Virginius," which gave a lasting celebrity to Mr. Macready. Already, however, had a play on the subject, by Soane, been accepted at Drury Lane, and in the Roman father Kean was for the first time designedly opposed to the younger actor. He utterly failed; while Mr. Macready, in the part written for Kean, won a noble victory. Kean might have said, as the captured French Marshal said to Marlborough:—"Change sides with me, and I'll fight it out again, to a very different issue."

A range through his principal parts, and a running salute of thundering puffs on the part of Elliston, heralded his visit to America in 1820. He played at Liverpool before embarking, and like George Frederick Cooke, had a hit at the audience before he left them. They were the coldest people, he said, in whose presence he had ever acted. That was true; but though Liverpool was chary of approbation, it had applauded ungrateful Edmund more cordially than any other actor. From his first trip to America he brought back much solid gold, a detestation of the Boston people, who would not patronise the theatre at an unfashionable season of the year, and one of the toe-bones of Cooke, over whose translated and mutilated remains, he raised the monument of which I have already spoken. Some ill-health he brought back with him too; but he rallied, drank, relapsed, and struggled into strength again. It was wasted on Miss Baillie's "De Montfort;" though parts of this were played in his grandest style. He seemed conscious that something was expected of him

by the public, and he flung himself, as it were, at every thing. He played Hastings to the Jane Shore of a Miss Edmiston—whose success was predicted by aristocratic poets, and who is now, I believe, painfully "strolling." With Sir Pertinax he did not move the dead Macklin as his Shylock may have done; though it was better played, save in the accent, than any living actor could have played it. His Osmond gave some dignity to the "Castle Spectre," and his Wolsey but little to "Henry VIII."

For Miss Tidswell's farewell benefit, after forty years of useful subalternship, he attempted Don Felix. He would have done more for her had he been asked; for in his breadless, boyish days, she had beaten, taught, fed, and clothed him—till Nance Carey claimed him for her own, and stole *all* his earnings. Edmund's good impulses made him fail in affection to this parent. Thinking of Miss Tidswell, he used to say—"If she wasn't my mother, why was she kind to me?" For his own benefit, in this season of 1821-2, he played the Roman Actor, Octavian, and Tom Tug—the song in which last part he sang with great feeling. The whole proceeds of this benefit he gave to the fund for the starving Irish. It was not exactly like Mrs. Haller's charity, who gives her master's wine to the sick poor; but, that virtue, which is said to begin at home, might have sent the amount in a different direction.

In November, 1822, he played out the first of his two great struggles with Young, at Drury Lane. Since Quin and Garrick, or Garrick and Barry, no conjunction of great names moved the theatrical world like this. Both men put out all their powers, and the public profited by the magnificent display. Kean and Young acted together—Othello and Iago, Lothaire and Guiscard, Jaffier and Pierre, Alexander and Clytus, Posthumus and Iachimo, eliciting enthusiasm by all, but by none so much as by Othello and Iago. The two great wrestlers won equal honour; but that was not enough for one of them. "How long, sir," said Kean to Elliston, the manager, "How long am I to play with that—*Jesuit*, Young?" Certainly, if he feared competition with experienced actors, Kean was very encouraging to beginners. "You are the best Iago I ever played to," he once remarked to an earnest, youthful, gentleman at Edinburgh. The latter smiled; and Kean asked him *wherefore?* "Because, sir," was the answer, "I know of seven poor Iagos, to whom you have kindly said the same thing!"

He might have begun a fresh career, had he so minded. But

success did not brace him to new effort, except a quietly ineffectual one to make the world forget the Stranger of John Kemble. His failing strength was probably the chief cause of his avoiding or refusing to appear in the same piece with Mr. Macready, of whom he rather rudely remarked,—"He is no actor, sir; he is a player!"

But the satirist himself was fast ceasing to be either. He had never recovered from the madness which he prophesied would follow his success in London. Gradually he lost all self-control, plunged into terrible excesses, courted rather than fell into evil company, took tribute, indeed, most willingly of the noble and intellectual who heaped rich gifts upon him, but he scorned or feared their society. He affected to feel that they invited him simply to stare at him, and that they would have despised him as a poor actor. He had not common sense enough to see that when the noble and intellectual opened their doors to him they rendered graceful homage to his genius,—and I have heard that where he *did* accept such homage, and was himself subdued to the refinements of the society where it was liberally, yet delicately rendered, his easy bearing was that of a man who had not lost his self-respect, and his manners and conversation emphatically "charming."

But this was under restraint, and to be thus "charming" was irksome to Edmund Kean:—by this time it had become almost impossible, and he could charm only those on whom the magic was not worth expending. He had not broken his word to his wife, that she should ride in her carriage, nor to his son, that he should go to Eton; but he had not made the first happier, nor the second the more attached to him. His home, indeed, was broken up, and in the season of 1824-5, after failing in the poor melo-dramatic part of Masaniello, came out the great scandal—that he loved his neighbour's wife better than his own. All its necessary consequences followed,—a fierce, an almost ruffianly hostility on the part of his audiences, damage to his fortune, and irretrievable ruin to his reputation. Reckless and defiant as he was, he was glad to endure exile, for such was his voyage to, and sojourn in, America during this and the following year.

Let me notice that he bore himself in presence of a cruel audience, with an almost ferocious courage. His pride was greater than his humiliation. As at Drury, he applied every strong epithet in his part to the howling pit, so, when running his erratic course through the minor theatres, he could treat

audiences that were ignorant, as well as insolent, with strong terms and lofty contempt. He had one night played Othello to a "Coburg" public. Iago was acted by Cobham, the performer who had once vainly attempted to dethrone him, by acting Richard at Covent Garden to a house, however, which would not listen to him to the end. The New-Cut costermongers adopted him; they applauded him, on this particular night, more than they did the great Kean, who received £50 for condescending to exhibit himself in Othello. Nevertheless, at the fall of the curtain, there was such an uproar in front, apparently a call for Kean, that he came slowly forward, and bluntly asked, "What do you want?" A thousand voices answered, "You! you!" "Well," said Kean, after a slight peroration, "I have played in every civilised country where English is the language of the people; but I never acted to an audience of such unmitigated brutes as you are!" He walked slowly off, as Cobham, to a shout for him from the sweet voices of his Lambeth-marsh patrons, rushed on the stage, proud and radiant, to tell Edmund's "unmitigated brutes" that they were the most enlightened and liberal audience that had ever sat as judges of acting, and that the happiest night of his life was that on which he had the opportunity of telling his friends and admirers that incontrovertible truth. A cry that might have been heard across St. George's Fields proclaimed him to be a "trump!" —and Cobham won the honours of the night! Kean was as fearless with better audiences than those of the Coburg. He once played Sir Giles to a thin house at Birmingham, for his own benefit. When the lover referred to the daughter of Sir Giles: "Take her, sir," said Kean, "and the Birmingham audience into the bargain." This was insulting his friends for the offences of the absent.

Kean, as before recorded, betook himself again to America. Since his previous visit to the Northern States he was greatly changed; but that the seeds of insanity were in him at the earlier period, a passage from Dr. Francis's *Old New York* will mournfully show. Some hospitable friends exerted themselves to render his earlier stay agreeable, and this is an incident of the time,—one out of many:—

"A few days after, we made the desired visit at Bloomingdale. Kean, with an additional friend and myself, occupied the carriage for a sort of philosophical exploration of the city on our way there. On the excursion he remarked, he should like to see our Vauxhall; we stopped, he entered the gate, asked the door-keeper if

he might survey the place, gave a double somerset through the air, and in the twinkling of an eye stood at the remote part of the garden. The wonder of the superintendant can be better imagined than described. Arriving at the Asylum, with suitable gravity he was introduced to the officials, invited to an inspection of the afflicted inmates, and then told if he would ascend to the roof of the building a delightful prospect would be presented to his contemplation; many counties, and an area of sea, rivers, and lands, mountains, and valleys, embracing a circuit of forty miles in circumference. His admiration was expressed in delirious accents:—'I'll walk the ridge of the roof of the Asylum,' he exclaimed, 'and take a leap! its the best end I can make to my life;' and forthwith started for the western gable end of the building. My associate and myself as he hurried forward seized him by the arms, and he submisively returned. I have ever been at a loss to account for this sudden freak in his feelings; he was buoyant at the onset of the journey; he astonished the Vauxhall doorkeeper by his harlequin trick, and took an interest in the various forms of insanity which came before him. He might have become too sublimated in his feelings, or had his senses unsettled (for he was an electrical apparatus) in contemplating the mysterious influences acting on the minds of the deranged, for there is an attractive principle, as well as an adhesive principle, in madness; or a crowd of thoughts might have oppressed him, arising from the disaster which had occurred to him a few days before with the Boston audience, and the irreparable loss he had sustained in the plunder of his trunk and valuable papers, while journeying hither and thither on his return to New York. We rejoiced together, however, when we found him again safely at home at his old lodgings at the City Hotel."

That the fit had not decreased by lapse of time, another extract from the same volume will amply demonstrate. Kean was not so satisfied with the success he achieved professionally, as he was of a visit to an Indian tribe who enrolled him among their chiefs. It was a freak which he took seriously, as will be seen by what follows;—

"Towards the close of his second visit to America Kean made a tour through the northern part of the State, and visited Canada; he fell in with the Indians, with whom he became delighted, and was chosen a chief of a tribe. Some time after, not aware of his return to the city, I received at a late hour of the evening a call to wait upon an Indian chief, by the name of Alantenaida, as the highly finished card left at my house had it.

Kean's ordinary card was *Edmund Kean*, engraved; he generally wrote beneath, '*Integer vitæ scelerisque purus.*' I repaired to the hotel, and was conducted upstairs to the folding doors of the hall, where the servant left me. I entered, aided by the feeble light of the moon; but at the remote end I soon perceived something like a forest of evergreens, lighted up by many rays from floor lamps, and surrounded by a stage or throne; and seated in great state was the chief. I advanced, and a more terrific warrior I never surveyed. Red Jacket or Black Hawk was an unadorned simple personage in comparison. Full dressed, with skins tagged loosely about his person, a broad collar of bear-skin over his shoulders, his leggings with many stripes, garnished with porcupine quills; his moccasins decorated with beads, his head decked with the war-eagle's plumes, behind which flowed massive black locks of dishevelled horse-hair, golden-coloured rings pendant from the nose and ears, streaks of yellow paint over the face, massive red daubings about the eyes, with various lines in streaks about the forehead, not very artistically drawn. A broad belt surrounded his waist, with tomahawk; his arms, with shining bracelets, stretched out with bow and arrow, as if ready for a mark. He descended his throne, and rapidly approached me. His eye was meteoric and fearful, like the furnace of the Cyclops. He vociferously exclaimed, ALANTENAIDA, the vowels strong enough. I was relieved, he betrayed something of his raucous voice in imprecation. It was Kean. An explanation took place. He wished to know the merits of the representation. The Hurons had honoured him by admission into their tribe, and he could not now determine whether to seek his final earthly abode with them, for real happiness, or return to London and add renown to his name by performing the Son of the Forest. I never heard that he ever after attempted in his own country the character. He was wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm at the Indian honour he had received, and declared that even old Drury had never conferred so proud a distinction on him as he had received from the Hurons."

I shall not soon forget that January night of 1827, on which he re-appeared at Drury Lane, in Shylock. A rush so fearful, an audience so packed, a reconciliation so complete, acting so faultless, and a dramatic enjoyment so exquisite, I never experienced. Nothing was heeded,—indeed, the scenes were passed over, till Shylock was to appear: and I have heard no such shout since, as that which greeted him. Fire, strength, beauty;—

every quality of the actor seemed to have acquired fresh life. It was all deceptive, however. The actor was all but extinguished, after this convulsive, but seemingly natural effort. He lay in bed at the Hummums' hotel, all day, amusing himself melancholily with his Indian gew-gaws, and striving to find a healthy tonic in "cognac." While immolating himself, he still clung to a hope of rescue; and he strove to create one more new character, Ben Nazir, in Mr. Colley Grattan's tragedy of that name. His power of memory was gone; but he had a fatuitous idea that he had mastered his part, and this is how he figured in it, as told by the author of that hapless drama, himself. The picture has been often exhibited; but it must needs be looked upon once more:—

"He did at length appear. The intention of the author, and the keeping of the character, required him to rush rapidly on the stage, giving utterance to a burst of joyous soliloquy. What was my astonishment, to see him, as the scene opened, standing in the centre of the stage, his arms crossed, and his whole attitude one of thoughtful solemnity. His dress was splendid; and thunders of applause greeted him from all parts of the house. To display the one, and give time for the other, were the objects for which he stood fixed for several minutes, and sacrificed the sense of the situation. He spoke; but what a speech! The one I wrote, consisted of eight or nine lines; *his*, was of two or three *sentences*, —but not six consecutive words of the text. His look, his manner, his tone, were to *me* quite appalling; to any other observer, they must have been incomprehensible. He stood fixed; drawled out his incoherent words, and gave the notion of a man that had been half hanged and then dragged through a horse pond. My heart, I confess it, sank deep in my breast. I was utterly shocked. And as the business of the play went on, and as *he* stood by, with moveless muscle and glazed eye, throughout the scene which should have been one of violent, perhaps too violent exertion,—a cold shower of perspiration poured from my forehead, and I endured a revulsion of feeling which I cannot describe, and which I would not for worlds, one eye had witnessed. I had all along felt, that this scene would be the touchstone of the play. Kean went through it like a man in the last stage of exhaustion and decay. The act closed; a dead silence followed the fall of the curtain; and I felt, though I could not hear, the voiceless verdict of "damnation." . . . . . When the curtain fell, Mr. Wallack, the stage manager, came forward, and made an apology

for Kean's imperfection in his part, and an appeal in behalf of the play. Neither excited much sympathy; the audience was quite disgusted. I now, for the first time during the night, went behind the scenes. On crossing the stage towards the green room, I met Kean, supported by his servant and another person, going in the direction of his dressing room. When he saw me, he hung down his head, and waved his hand, and uttered some expressions of deep sorrow, and even remorse. 'I have ruined a fine play, and myself; I cannot look you in the face,' were the first words I caught. I said something in return, as cheering and consolatory as I could. I may say, that all sense of my own disappointment was forgotten, in the compassion I felt for him."

The descent now was rapid, but it was not made at one leap. Penniless, though he might have been lord of "thousands," he caught at an offer to provide for his son by a cadetship; but the son refused to accept the offer,—as such acceptation would have exposed his mother to worse than the destitution of her earlier days,—before hope of a bright, though closing future, had died away. To lose her son, was to lose the best friend she had; for she had none, now, in her faithless and suicidal husband. Edmund Kean heard of his son's determination to go on the stage, in order to support his mother, with grim dissatisfaction, and, I should hope, some sense of reproach and abasement. They parted in anger, it is said, as far as the father was concerned; the more angry, perhaps, that in his temporary wrath he cast off the son whom he, in his heart, must have respected.

Consequently, the season of 1827-8, at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, had a singular incident to mark it;—the struggle of the son to rise, at the former; the struggle of the father not to fall, at the latter. Mr. Charles Kean opened the season, in Norval. Mr. Cole, in his biography of the son, quotes a letter, written by a friend of the father, to the latter, in which the writer, who had watched the attempt, remarks:—"The speech, 'My name is Norval,' he hurried, and spoke as though he had a cold, or was pressing his finger against his nose."

The attempt, in short, was unsuccessful; so had that of many an aspirant been who subsequently reaped triumphs at his will; and Mr. Charles Kean might find consolation. The attempt, at all events, enabled him to fix his foot on the first step of the giddy ascent; and, let it be said, he owed the possibility of doing so, entirely to his father's name. So young a man, without a great name, would have found no access to Drury open to him;

and I like to think, that if he missed the fortune which his half mad, yet kindly impulsive father, had promised him, he owed to that father the foundations on which he raised another. He inherited a great name and a great warning.

While the son was anxiously and painfully laying those foundations, the sire was absolutely electrifying audiences at Covent Garden by old flashes of his might, or disappointing them by his incapacity, or his capricious absence. He reminded me of Don Juan, who, though he went with open eyes recklessly to destruction, flung off the fiends, who at last grasped him, with a fearful, but vainly expended energy. On one night, when he played Othello to Young's Iago, the Cassio of Charles Kemble, the Roderigo of Farley, and the Desdemona of Miss Jarman, I saw strong men clamber from the pit, over the lower boxes, to escape suffocation, and weak men, in a fainting condition, passed by friendly hands towards the air, in the same way. I remember Charles Kemble, in his lofty, bland way, trying to persuade a too-closely packed audience to fancy themselves comfortable, and to be silent, which they would not be till *he* appeared, who, on that, and some after nights, could subdue them to silence or stir them into ecstasy, at his will.

To those who saw him from the front, there was not a trace of weakening of any power in him. But, oh ye few who stood between the wings where a chair was placed for him, do you not remember the saddening spectacle of that wrecked genius,—a man in his very prime, with not merely the attributes of age about him, but with some of the infirmities of it, which are wont to try the heart of love itself. Have you forgotten that helpless, speechless, fainting mass bent up in that chair; or the very unsavoury odour of that very brown, very hot, and very strong brandy-and-water, which alone kept alive the once noble Moor? Aye, and *still* noble Moor; for when his time came, he looked about as from a dream, and sighed, and painfully got to his feet, swayed like a column in an earthquake, and in not more time than is required for the telling of it, was before the audience, as strong and as intellectually beautiful as of old;—but only happy in the applause which gave him a little breathing space, and saved him from falling dead upon the stage.

During a few nights of another year or two, he acted under the exacting conditions of a nature that had been violated. He gained a little strength from his island home in Bute, and even acted in Glasgow, Cork, and Dublin, with his son, in whose suc-

cess he took a father's part. During part of the time of his repose in Bute, he had as a visitor, young William Beverley, with whose father, his old manager, he had become reconciled. He was fond of the boy, admired his drawings, and, as I am informed, while the young artist was occupied beneath the window, sketching, Kean was often seated at the piano, singing Moore's Melodies, with taste and feeling. The man and boy were attached to each other. In the boy's presence, Kean never committed any excess. Once he said to his young guest, "If I could keep you by my side, I might be saved yet!" Thrice he essayed fresh study, and once he nearly conquered; his Virginius, in Knowles's play, was superbly affecting, in fragmentary passages, but he tried it at too late a period, not of his natural life, but of his professional career. "Richard II." was magnificently got up for him, but as the curtain was about to rise, it was discovered that he was not in the house,—and days passed before he emerged into the world and decency. His last essay in a new part was in "Henry V.;" but he broke down, addressed the audience deprecatorily, muttered something about being the representative of Shakspeares heroes, and lamented, at little more than forty, what Macklin did not plead till he was past ninety,—his decaying memory.

Now and then, the town saw him, but his hold on it was nearly gone. He was now at the Haymarket; and then, uncertainly, at Drury Lane; and again at the Haymarket in 1832, where I saw him for the last of many times, in Richard. The sight was pitiable. Genius was not traceable in that bloated face; intellect was all but quenched in those once matchless eyes; and the power seemed gone, despite the will that would recall it. I noted in a diary, that night, the above facts, and, in addition, that by bursts he was as grand as he had ever been,—that though he looked well as long as he was still, he moved only with difficulty, using his sword as a stick. I find, and perfectly remember, that there was a murmur of approbation at the pause and action of his extended arm, as he said—"in the deep bosom of the ocean,—BURIED!"—as if he consigned all lowering clouds to the sea. At—"The dogs bark at me, as I halt by them:" the action was so expressive as to elicit a round of applause; and in the last of the lines—

> "Why what a peevish fool was he of Crete,
> Who taught his son the office of a fowl,
> And yet for all his wings, the fool was drown'd,"

the playful yet fiendish sarcasm was delivered with marvellous effect. His words, after "Die, prophet, in thy speech,"—"For this among the rest was I *ordained*." seemed like a devilish joke after a burst of fury. In—

> "Villains, set down the corse, or by St. Paul,
> I'll make a corse of him that disobeys,"—

his voice was scarcely distinguishable; but his old attitude of leaning at the side scene, as he contemplated Lady Anne, was as full of grace as ever,—save that the contemplator had now a swollen and unkingly face. Then—

> "Shine out fair sun, till I have bought a glass,
> That I may see my shadow as I pass,"—

was sportive in accent as in the very action of saluting; and there was a world of argument and resolution in the delivery of the simple words—"The tower?—*Aye;* the TOWER!" The chuckle at "So much for *Buck*ingham!" I always considered wanting in dignity, but it brought a roar of applause. In the scene with the Mayor and Buckingham, he displayed talent unsurpassable; —the scarcely-subdued triumph that lurked in his eyes, as he refused the crown; his tone in "Call him again;" his acceptance of the throne, and his burst of joy, when he had dismissed the petitioners, were perfect in their several ways; but he was exhausted before the fifth act, and when, after a short fight, Richmond (Cooper) gave him his death-wound in Bosworth Field, as he seemed to deal the blow, he grasped Kean by the hand, and let him gently down, lest he should be injured by a fall.

The end was at hand. He could no longer even venture, after the play, to Offley's symposium, in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, that lively singing-room, with a window looking into the mouldiest of churchyards,—where, however, slept some noble actors. To and from Richmond he occasionally travelled,—a feeble bundle of humanity, that seemed to lie unconciously in one corner of his carriage. But, I think, conscience was there, too, and rage, and remorse,—that a life had been so wasted, and mighty powers, almost as divine as the poet's so irretrievably abused. He aroused himself to make his last appearance, as it proved, on the stage, in conjunction with his son, in Othello, Mr. Charles Kean playing Iago. The night was the 25th of March,

1833. Edmund Kean was so shattered in frame, that he had scarcely strength to pass over him the dress of the Moor; so shattered in nerve, that he dreaded some disaster. Brandy gave some little heart to the greatly fallen actor, but he anxiously enjoined his son to be ever near him, in case of some mischance, and he went through the part, dying as he went, till after giving the sweet utterance, as of old, to the celebrated "Farewell," ending with "Othello's occupation's gone!" he attempted to utter the next speech, and in the attempt fell on his son's shoulder, with a whispered moan, "I am dying,—speak to them for me!" The curtain here descended on him for ever, and the rest was only slow death, with intervals of hope. He, the faithless, and now helpless, husband sent a note, which sounds as a cry of anguish, to that good Mary Chambers of old, who had had the ill-luck to listen to his wooing. But, having so listened, she would not now be deaf to the wail of the man who said that he had gone wrong in judgment, not in feeling; in head, not in heart, and who cried, "Come home; forget and forgive!" She went, and forgave; an angel could not, however, have forgotten all; but she acted as if she had, and the true-hearted young partner of his early miseries was the gentle alleviator of his last sufferings. She stood by him till, on the 15th of May, death came upon the unconscious man after some old tag of Octavian had passed his restless lips, of "*Farewell. Flo—, Floranthe!*" An hour before, (according to Mr. Paul Bedford,) he had leaped from his bed, with the exclamation of "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" and this had exhausted him. His grave is in Richmond churchyard, where he has for craft-fellows in God's acre, the great tragic actress Mrs. Yates and her husband, Richard.

Come home! was the dying actor's cry to his wife. Dead; there was no home for the widow; for creditors took possession of it, and its contents. To such end had come the humble and hapless wedding of Mary Chambers and Edmund Kean at Gloucester, the brief glory after long suffering,—sorrow and want at the end as at the beginning; with him, an added shame; with her, uncomplainingness. Yes, and consolation. The happiness she lacked with her husband was vouchsafed to her through her son, and the union of the two strolling players at Gloucester was thus not altogether barren of good and happy fruits.

And over the grave of one of the greatest of actors something may be said in extenuation of his faults. Such curse as there can be in a mother's indifference hung about him before his birth.

A young Huron, of whose tribe he subsequently became a member, could not have lived a more savage,—but certainly enjoyed a more comfortable and better-tended boyhood. Edmund Kean, from that very time of boyhood, had genius, industry, and ambition,—but, with companionship enough to extinguish the first, lack of reward sufficient to dull the second, and repeated visitations of disappointment that might have warranted the exchange of high hopes for brutal despair,—he nourished his genius, maintained his industry, and kept an undying ambition, under circumstances when to do so was a part of heroism. Compare his young and hard and blackguard life with the disciplined boyhood of Betterton, the early associations of Booth, the school career of Quin, the decent but modest childhood of Macklin, the gentlemanly home of the youth Garrick, the bringing up of Cooke, and the Douay College life of the Kembles. Kean was trained upon blows, and curses, and starvation, and the charity of strangers. It was enough to make all his temper convert to fury, and any idea of such a young, unnurtured savage, ever becoming an inheritor of the mantle worn by the actors I have named, would have seemed a madness even to that mother who soon followed him in death, Nance Carey.* But Edmund Kean cherished the idea, warm in his bosom, never ceased to qualify himself for the attempt, studied for it while he starved,—and when about to make it, felt and said that success would drive him mad. I believe it did; but whether or not, I can part from *the* great actor of my young days only with a tender respect. I do not forget the many hours of bright intellectual enjoyment for which I, in common with thousands, was indebted to him, and, in the contemplation of this actor's incomparable genius, I desire to forget the errors of the man.

Over his remains, in Richmond churchyard, a plain tablet arrests the eye. I never look at it without a crowd of memories of the old and brilliant scene he for awhile adorned, nor without thinking of the words of Lesingham, in the Elizabethan drama:—

> "Oh! what our wills will do,
> With over-rash and headlong peevishness,
> To bring our calm discretion to repentance!"

Mrs. Fanny Kemble justly awards to this great actor what her

* An itinerant actress, named Mrs. Cuthbert, now "playing" for her livelihood at the age of seventy-four, is said, by a writer in the *Athenæum*, to be a half-sister of Edmund Kean.

family and the "Kemble school" denied. "He was a great genius," says the lady; "a man of most original and striking powers. . . . Who that ever heard, will ever forget the beauty, the unutterable tenderness of his reply to Desdemona's entreaties for Cassio: 'Let him come when he will, I can deny thee nothing;' the deep despondency of his, 'Oh, now farewell;' the miserable anguish of his, 'Oh, Desdemona, away, away!' Who that ever saw will ever forget the fascination of his dying eyes in Richard; when deprived of his sword, the wondrous power of his look seemed yet to avert the uplifted arm of Richmond." Mrs. Fanny Kemble thinks Kean lacked perfect conception of a part, but contented himself with "acting detached passages alone, and leaving all the others, and the entire character, indeed, utterly destitute of unity, or the semblance of any consistency, whatever." This is, in a high degree, mere fantasy. Richard was perfectly conceived and embodied; consistent throughout. The unity of conception was one of the marvels of his Shylock; and refinement of detail and evenness of execution, with amazing power of concentrating effect, distinguished alike his Othello, who is all heart, and his Sir Giles, who is all head. Mrs. F. Kemble comes to some such conclusion when she says: "Kean is gone—and with him are gone Othello, Shylock, and Richard."

CHAPTER LII.

EPILOGUE.

Looking, recently, at the old patent granted by Charles II. to Killigrew and Davenant (now in Drury Lane Theatre), I could not help remarking, that the parchment for which so many hundreds of thousands of pounds had been given, was now virtually worthless, save for the superb portrait of Charles, within the gigantic initial letter of his name. When that patent for two theatres was granted, London was less populous than Manchester is now; and as the population increased, theatres (beginning with that in Goodman's Fields) sprung up in spite of the patent or Lord Chamberlain. The latter granted licenses to a few, with great restrictions. At the Lyceum, for instance, not even a tragedy could be produced, unless there were at least five songs or concerted pieces in each act; and the tragedy even then must be called a *burletta*. The licenser's powers did not extend to St. George's Fields, where political plays, forbidden on the Middlesex side of the river, were attractive merely *because* they were forbidden.

Subsequently, at the minor theatres, plays, which could only be legally acted at the patent houses, were performed, without being converted into burlettas. The proprietors of the patents prosecuted the offenders; but the levying of penalties (£50 nightly), against Englishmen, for producing, or acting in, Shakspeare's plays, seemed so absurd, that after some toying with the question, in 1842, the government brought forward the bill of 1843, which passed both houses, after Lord Campbell had deprived it of some tyrannic authority it conferred upon the Lord Chamberlain. A "free trade" principle was thereby introduced. The patent houses lost all their privileges, save that of being exempt from a yearly renewal of license to act; and the legitimate drama could be performed in any licensed theatre. At Sadler's

Wells, for instance, it was long and worthily upheld by Mr. Phelps, without fear of every actor therein incurring a penalty of £300 weekly, as when he played every night, contrary to law.

With regard to "Their Majesties' Servants," Mr. Webster, who occupies Garrick's chair, in the management of the Theatrical Fund, tells me, that Baddeley was the last actor who wore the uniform of scarlet and gold, prescribed for the "gentlemen of the household," who were patented actors; and that he used to appear in it at rehearsal. He was proud of being one of their "Majesties' servants;"—a title once coveted by all nobly-aspiring actors. They were sometimes nearest to the desired end when they seemed farthest off. "Have you ever heard," asks Garrick, in an unpublished letter to Moody, then at Liverpool, "of a Mrs. Siddons, who is strolling about somewhere near you?" Four months later, Garrick brought her out at Drury Lane. That space of time intervened, between the periods when Edmund Kean was starving and triumphing. And now, in the green-room of Drury Lane Theatre, the busts of Mrs. Siddons and Kean face each other; while that of Shakspeare, opposite Garrick, seems to smile on all three,—*his* great interpreters, as well as THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS.

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